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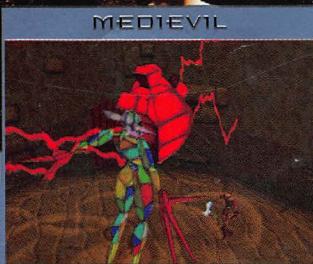
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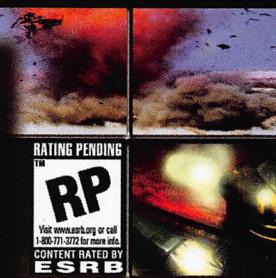


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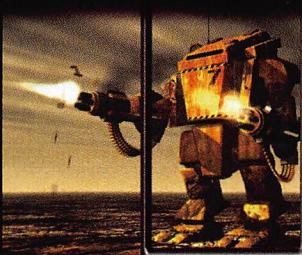
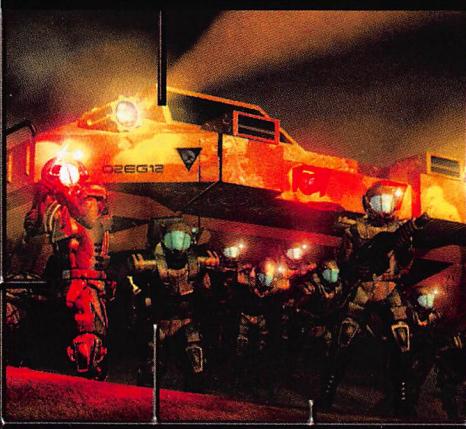
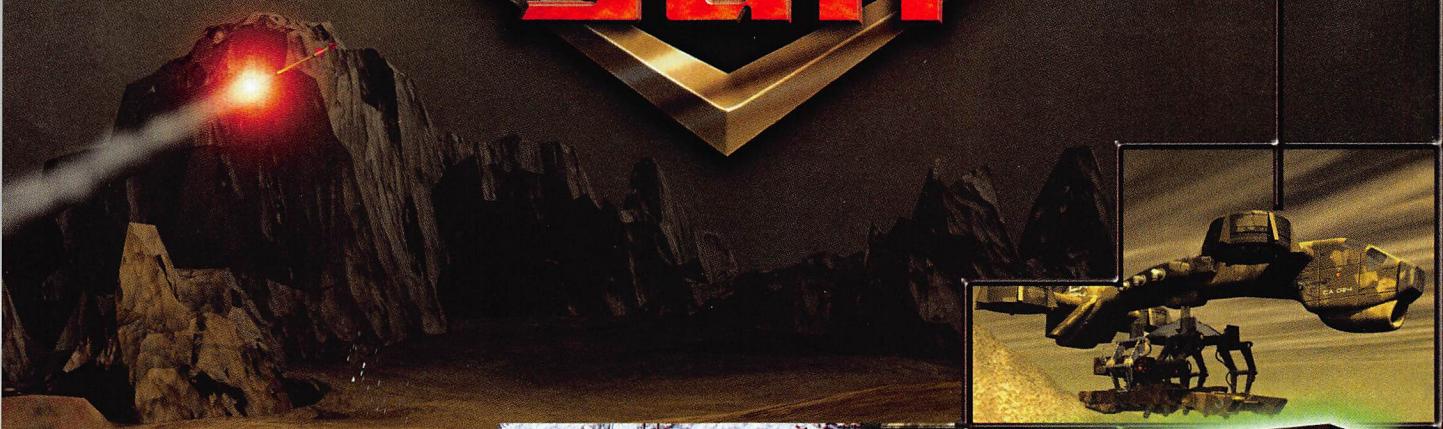


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PUBLISHER'S LOG 1-4



In anticipation of Sega's Dreamcast, one of the biggest questions on my mind was whether or not SOA would repeat what I thought was the single biggest mistake they made with the launch of the Saturn: the absence of their mascot (who at the time was said to be more popular than Mickey Mouse), *Sonic the Hedgehog*, as a launch title. Sega instead opted for Pepperoucha as a mascot of sorts but, for the most part, went mascot free; it's the sexy bald woman who first comes to mind when I think back to those pivotal times. The explanation was that *Sonic* was for kids, and the Saturn was meant to usher in a new breed of gamers. What Sega failed to realize was that we were those kids and, regardless of how old a game player you are, if you were around during the introduction of *Sonic*, when underdog Sega gained on Nintendo as a result, you'll never forget the little guy. Pause briefly, and I'm sure each and every one of you can conjure up the intro and first level music. You probably can't remember what you had for dinner last night, but memories of the indelible *Sonic* are available on command. The fact is, when it came time to launch the Nintendo 64, Nintendo was all about Shigeru Miyamoto and his *Mario*, and when the next evolution of the PlayStation arrives, I'm sure *Crash* won't be far behind. So it was with great relief that I received the news that on August 22 at the Tokyo International Forum, *Sonic's* creator, Yuji Naka, will announce and talk about *Sonic Adventure* - the Dreamcast *Sonic* game he has been working on since he finished *Nights*. When asked during this announcement what type of a game *Sonic Adventure* would be, Yuji replied, "A game like this has never existed before." Coming from the man behind *Sonic* and *Nights*, that statement conjures up visions of pure grandeur. Whether or not *Sonic Adventure* will make the November 20 Dreamcast launch in Japan remains a mystery, but it's safe to assume that it will easily make the US launch. No matter what happens before or after its debut, it is my belief that the Dreamcast hardware will be so awesome, there will be no stopping its rise to the top. And with *Sonic* leading the way, I'd have to say it's just about a sure thing. 128-bit gaming will soon be upon us, followed by Nintendo and Sony's next move. We keep going on this ride, and every time we do it gets more and more fun. This time around, we're going to need heavy shoes to keep us grounded. Enjoy GR number four!

Gamers' Republic: (n.) 1. A magazine in which the supreme power rests on the body of the readership entitled to further their gaming knowledge, exercised by representatives chosen directly or indirectly by them.

2. Any body of persons viewed as a commonwealth of ultraistic and voracious video gamers.

3. A philosophical dialogue dealing with the composition and structure of the gaming genre and all subdivisions.

4. A monthly gaming publication encapsulating lavish presentation, entertaining prose and in-depth information on the subject of video and PC games.

Game on...



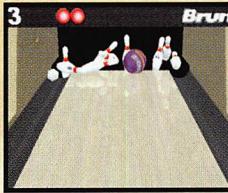
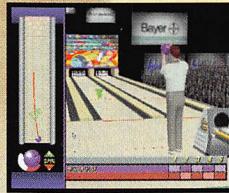
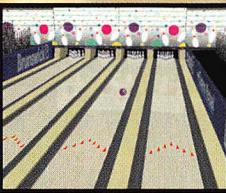
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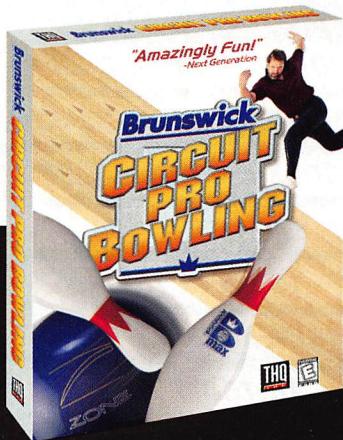
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FRONTLINES

NEC DREAMCAST SPECIAL! LAUNCH TITLES UNVEILED!

NEC has announced two Dreamcast titles, *Seventh Cross* and *Sengoku Turb*, set for a simultaneous release with the system on November 20 of this year.

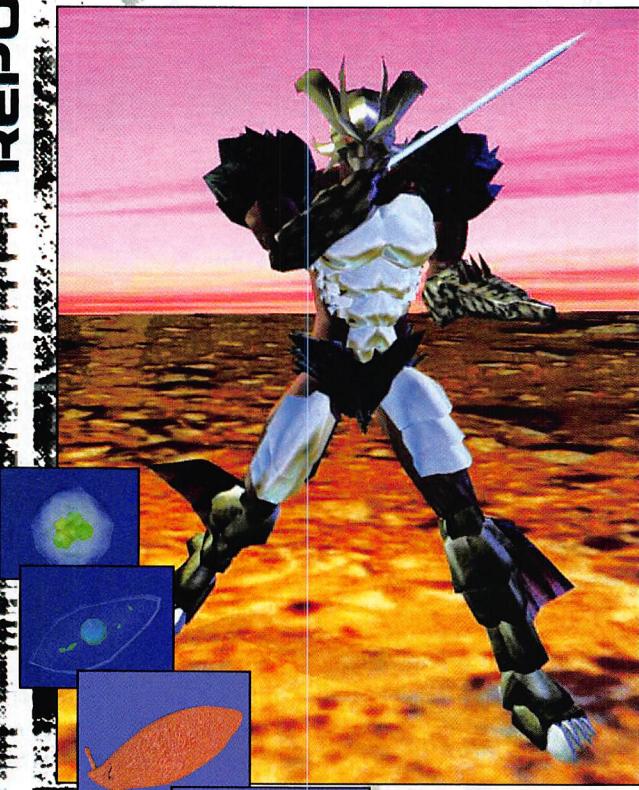
seventh cross

Seventh Cross is a pseudo-simulation game where you attempt to become the most powerful creature in an artificial world through constant evolution and the termination of lesser creatures. You start off the game as a humble micro-organism, devouring other microbes in an attempt to grow stronger and more intelligent. What

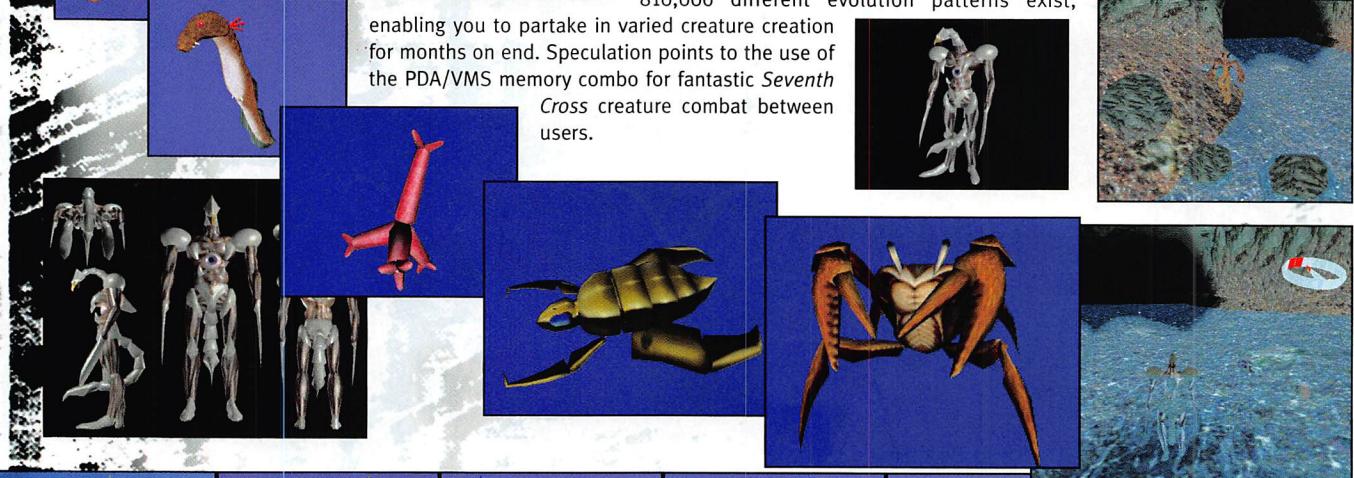
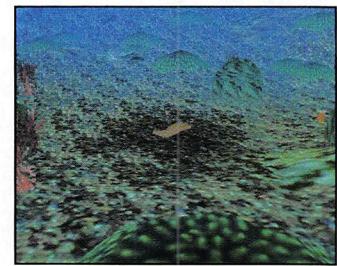
you consume will be divided into two categories: growth elements and evolution experience. Growth elements are necessary for the formation of new body parts during the evolution process, while Evolution experience is required to evolve as an organism. When the experience value reaches a certain level, signifying the advancement of your organism, you will be shown a DNA map on screen that can be modified (by drawing new lines) into a superior creature.

In order to successfully monitor so many variables, NEC has developed a new game "system" called Self Organization Map (SOM). It is the first system of this nature in the history of games. After players draw new DNA lines or points with color, SOM recognizes them as a neuron, then calculates and manipulates the evolution process automatically. The use of color in the shapes and lines that you draw is an interesting feature. Let's say you use red as a dominant color. Your being will become more physically powerful, and will be able to destroy other beings easier. In contrast, if you were to use white, your creature would become more intelligent and adaptable to its surroundings.

The game is very colorful, the environments will be huge, and objects will be detailed. Also, a total of 810,000 different evolution patterns exist,



enabling you to partake in varied creature creation for months on end. Speculation points to the use of the PDA/VMS memory combo for fantastic *Seventh Cross* creature combat between users.



SEN GOKU TURB



SEN GOKU TURB

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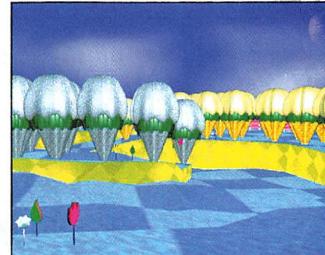
NEC's other Dreamcast creation, *Sengoku Turb*, is a comical action RPG starring a little girl named Jino-chan. She inadvertently becomes involved with a war between cats and sheep after her spaceship crash lands on the planet Liyon because of engine malfunctions. Although this editor cannot believe that he just wrote



that sentence, the story and characters actually do look really cute. The developer who designed one of the most popular character-driven games ever, *Tamagotchi*, is responsible for the bizarre personalities in *Sengoku Turb*. Every character is, of course, polygonal, and all graphical effects are rendered in real-time during battle scenes. These graphical effects are apparently stunning, as all programming staff members have been specifically working on 3D for the Power VR hardware since NEC launched the first PVR card for the PC.



gameplay. Because CG movies are pre-rendered, you sometimes see a character in a cut-scene that does not match the game. For example, you might see your character holding a weapon that he/she had never obtained in the game. This can sometimes lessen the appeal of the CG. In *Sengoku Turb*, NEC has solved this problem. The NPC system can supposedly reflect the condition of the real-time character/creature in CG, despite any changes that you've made. Our guess is that they're using a real-time, very high polygon count version of your creature and cleverly overlaying it on top of high quality CG FMV.



SPIKEOUT FIRST SHOTS!

Literally hours before we went to press, we received the first in-game shots of AM2's *Spikeout* (AKA *Spike*), and to be quite honest, they look amazing. Again, the VF3 style gameplay looks intact, the graphical texture maps look amazing (muscle-toned details, for example), and there's even a small boy in there. A small boy?



SONIC BOOMS WITH 128 BIT DREAMCAST TITLE!

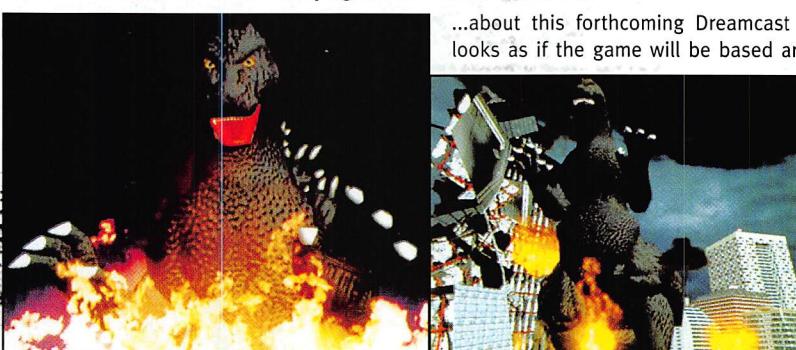
On August 22 at the Tokyo International Forum, Yuji Naka will host a press conference detailing Sega's plans for *Sonic Adventure*, the first Dreamcast title from his renowned Sonic Team...

Naka has stated that he began preliminary design work on the new *Sonic* after completing *NIGHTS*, and that the current game is literally bursting at the seams with new gameplay concepts. A response to the huge amount of user requests for a new 3D Sonic title, *Sonic Adventure* will no doubt serve as a showcase for Dreamcast's phenomenal 3D capabilities and of Naka's latest ideas on game design. Understandably tight lipped at this time, Mr. Naka will only say that "nothing like this [game] has ever existed before." The conference will be open to both press and users. We'll tell you what went down at this highly anticipated event as soon as possible.



UP FROM THE DEPTHS, 128 BITS BIG

Designed to work in conjunction with the little *Godzilla* PDA available now in Japan and featured on the next page, little else is known...



...about this forthcoming Dreamcast title. At least it looks as if the game will be based around the classic

Godzilla and not Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich's ridiculously bad summer movie. *DC Godzilla* could be out by year's end.

KONAMI TO PRODUCE DREAMCASTLEVANIA!

Konami has announced plans to produce a *Castlevania* game for Dreamcast. Unlike the fully 3D version currently in development for the N64, *DC Castlevania* will use the system's mighty rendering capabilities to produce a 60fps, 2.5D side scroller, with polygonal models so detailed, they look hand drawn. No word on release date...

TEAM ANDROMEDA TO DELIVER PANZER FOR DREAMCAST!

One of the most exciting Dreamcast announcements is that Sega's Team Andromeda is working on a new *Panzer Dragoon* game. Due to rather lackluster (and surprising) sales in Japan of the stellar *Panzer RPG*, this latest entry in the series is said to be action oriented. If Team Andromeda were able to produce on Saturn is any indication, *DC Panzer* could be the most beautiful game ever created.

THIS GAME STINKS

After so many initially exciting prospects for virtual reality, the technology has failed to live up to its promise...

...of providing a truly immersing artificial environment for users to interact in. Now, a unique experiment being performed in Japan's Tokyo University looks to add that all important olfactory sense to future VR applications. Under the supervision of Assistant Professor Hirose, a new device allows the fragrance from a flower or fruit displayed on a monitor to be sensed by a person as if they were in the room and a particular distance from that "object." It works by pumping a fragrance through a tube mounted close to the nose. According to Mr. Hirose, "It is possible to make a realistic game if we can make a device that can emit all different kinds of fragrances easily." Indeed. We're desperately hoping that *Fartman* is a dead franchise...

BILL'S DC VISION

At the Windows World Expo Tokyo 98, Microsoft solidified their connection with Sega's mega console...

...by having a completely kitted out Dreamcast



on display in their booth. Unlike other hardware displays, this one actually seemed to have internal components. When powered up, the little orange triangle on the front of the console lights up... orange! According to our sources, a logo of Windows CE that appeared on the outer casing will most likely also be there on the final version. Sega has indicated that there could still be changes made to the Dreamcast's external appearance before its launch this November.

WARP ENGINES CANNOT TAKE IT! D2 DELAYED...

Warp has announced that the release of *D2*, originally scheduled to be a Dreamcast launch title, will most likely be delayed. No details were released...

...concerning the possible length of the delay or the exact cause of it, other than that Kenji Eno and his *D2* team want to achieve everything they originally set out to do. The game's next public showing will be at the Tokyo Game Show between October 9 and 11, and more details concerning the game's future should be made more clear at that time.

GODZILLA VMS ARRIVES AT GR!

Barely beyond the madness of the Tamagotchi craze, just the idea of the little Godzilla VMS being an actual memory card...

...and piece of Dreamcast hardware was enough to illicit a Godzilla fighting frenzy. Plus, they were initially only available to those who attended the *Godzilla* premiere in Japan, so these 4 MEG memory packs are rarer than hen's teeth! The VMS' feature a surprisingly precise D-pad that was more than up to the task of raising the little TOHO creatures. Supposedly, these VMS' will work in some way with the upcoming Dreamcast *Godzilla* game.



NINTENDO'S 151 POKEMON OF POWER!

Nintendo of Japan will release *Pokemon Stadium* for the Nintendo 64 on August 1. The game will come packaged with a converter called the "64GB pack"...

This will allow interactivity between the GameBoy and the N64, where you raise the monster on your GameBoy and then upload the saved data to the GB64 pack. Once done, you can battle your monsters against CPU or other human monsters. There are three battle modes to choose from, which are the Free Battle and two different *Pokemon* leagues. It is recommended that in order to receive full enjoyment from the game, you should raise the monsters via the GameBoy.



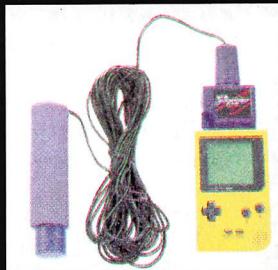
Train critters, then beckon them into a ring for a fight!
Cock and Dog Fighting has nothing on this!

GAMEBOY STEALTH INFILTRATION UNIT IS GO!

Bandai of Japan are set to release a sonar device for the GameBoy. This bizarre peripheral can be lowered up to 20 meters in water and used to track the swimming motion of fish. The GameBoy displays shades of gray to represent fish and other underwater terrain.

Bandai said, "GB can be used anywhere so we are thinking about something that could be used outdoors... We made the sonar on an experimental basis and exhibited it at a fishing gear expo. We have had a lot of favorable opinion about the sonar, so we decided to manufacture it."

Bandai have certainly taken the GameBoy to another level.

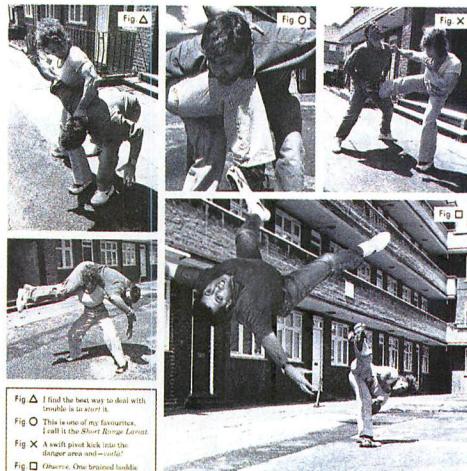


DEAD, ALIVE? BEATEN!

Tecmo have come up with a rather interesting and amusing advertisement...

...to promote the imminent release of *Dead or Alive* in the UK. It features a poor man being wrestled, beaten and generally abused by a really big, ugly woman. Seems as though those UK ad-men like a bit of dodgy Jackie Chan action in their cool ads. It made us laugh, anyway.

LEARN TO FIGHT THE 'DEAD OR ALIVE' WAY!



RARE UNLEASH A FULL JET FORCE!

It seems that Rare's newest project, *Jet Force Gemini*, is shaping up to be another fine piece of programming. You are able to take charge...

...of the three elite members of the *Jet Force Gemini* team, Vela, Juno and Lupus the dog, as they are forced to overthrow the evil mastermind Mizar. Featuring many different puzzles and secrets, you can expect the challenge to be one befitting a hardened gamer. Apparently the game uses a new, state-of-the-art 3D engine and total freedom of movement, allowing the player to take charge fully of the missions. All levels and multi-player aspects will be of the usual Rare high standards, so expect this smart looking game to be very special indeed. There is currently no fixed release date (big surprise), but we recently heard that Rare will not be releasing another title until at least next year. No *Donkey Kong 64* yet? Shucks.

THE CUP RUNNETH UNDER

In the post-cup doldrums, EA have been counting the number of units sold...

...of World Cup '98 and scratching their collective heads. So far they have shifted 225,000 copies in the UK, which isn't that bad, right? Well, considering the original target was



750,000, it's not

that brilliant, either. EA are assuring all that they will meet their pan-European quota of 2.3 million with the soccer game, but even so, *Gran Turismo* has currently sold more copies at 250,000 so far and is still rapidly climbing.



EURO DREAMCASTING

In other news from around the European gaming community, we are able to reveal some rather interesting nuggets of gossip...

Dreamcast fever has taken a hold on Europe, and with some new announcements, it's easy to see why people are getting excited. Infogrames have confirmed three new titles for Dreamcast. These are *Outcast 2*, *Alone in the Dark 4* and a new racing game called *Silver*. Core Design have confirmed that they are working on four Dreamcast titles—one of which is heavily rumored to be a *Tomb Raider* game, despite the fact that Core are denying it. Another title goes by the name of *Herdy Herdy* (as reported in issue 2), and involves a "Pied Piper of Hamelin-type plot-line." In an interview, the CEO of Eidos, Charles Cornwall, was quoted saying, "Anyone who is circumspect about Dreamcast's chances of success must be on drugs." Interesting choice of words, don't you think?

UK IN A SOLID STATE

Konami are set to release the now infamous three level demo of *Metal Gear Solid* with *ISS Pro 98* sometime in September, which will be great for the UK gamers who will no doubt have to wait the longest amount of time to get the official PAL release. And finally it would appear that the Managing Director of Psygnosis, UK, has quit and moved along to work elsewhere. Well, at least that's what we heard.



THE ULTIMATE MAN-MADE CREATION
HAS BECOME THE ULTIMATE GENOCIDE MACHINE
AND ONLY ONE FORCE CAN STEM THE DEADLY TIDE

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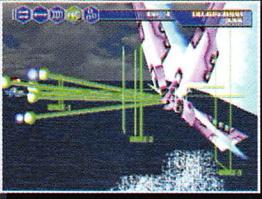
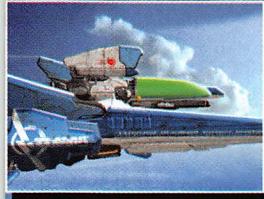
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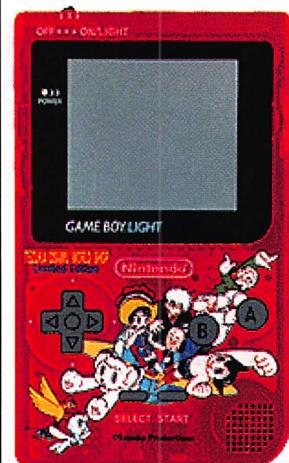
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GOD OF MANGA GRABS GAMEBOY

Sometimes referred to as the "God of Manga," the late Osamu Tezuka will receive his own limited edition GameBoy Light...

...from Media Factory. Creator of such influential and groundbreaking manga as *Astro Boy*, *Jungle Emperor Leo*, and *Black Jack*, he is credited with defining the modern manga style. The new GameBoy will come in an exclusive new clear red casing and feature character images from Tezuka's significant body of work. Available from the Tezuka Osamu World Shop in Tokyo's high-tech Akihabara district and through Lawson convenience stores, the unit will retail for 7500 yen (about \$55 US).

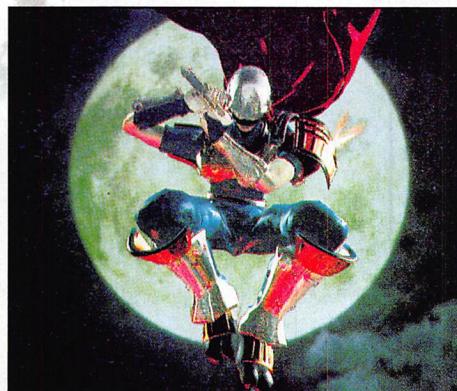
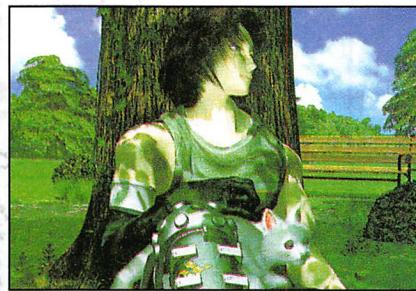


New limited edition GameBoy Light celebrates the influential manga creator Osamu Tezuka.

EHRGEIZ BATTLES ONTO THE PS!

Ehrgeiz will be converted to the PlayStation by the famous...

...Japanese company, Dream Factory. Scheduled to be released at the tail-end of 1998, this will mean that the translation period between arcade and home console will have been less than one year. Featuring ten individual characters, and no set fighting rules or restraints, you are able to interact with the backgrounds, jump from tall buildings, throw rocks and use other weapons. As well as the original arcade characters, Squaresoft are going to include some of the characters from the *Final Fantasy* series. Should be interesting. And, finally, it will include a quest mode (a la *Tobal*) to further enhance your gaming pleasure.



64-BIT OGRES SPOTTED!

Quest of Japan are set to release Ogre Battle 3...

...for the Nintendo 64 sometime this fall. This relatively surprise title will be based on the sixth chapter of the *Ogre Battle* saga, although it is actually only the third game to be released on a Nintendo system (Saturn and PlayStation



versions gained the series vast popularity). A number of the original programming team left Quest and were taken by Squaresoft to create *Final Fantasy Tactics*, so this effort will be brand new. Hopefully it will retain the charm and excitement of the first two games, as you are able to control the main character, Magnus, in his decision-making and battle prowess. Look here for more next month.



SATURN IN "NOT QUITE DEAD" SHOCKER!

Sega Saturn owners in Japan can still look forward to a constant stream of releases, even though the Dreamcast is stealing most of the limelight. With over 100 titles still in development, including digital comic and 2D games, players will be seeing new games released well into the new year and possibly even further in the future. Let's hope they at least get out a version of *Capcom vs. Marvel* before the lure of the dream machine becomes impossible to resist...

SQUARESOFT

NEW GAME PENNED

Squaresoft are planning to release a new dialogue adventure game...

...called *Another Mind* in the fall. The release of the game could signify the resurrection of Square's adventure series, in conjunction with the release of *Brave Fencer*. The game will not use CG, but instead it will use real video footage. The imaging will be handled by Imagine, a company known for many TV dramas in Japan. The game revolves around a high school student called Hitomi Hayama, and the player must solve different problems and puzzles that are encountered, with the help of an entity that resides in her conscious. Squaresoft have implemented a new control system known as the "dialogue system," which enables you to provide answers to questions, thus enhancing the nuances of conversation. This is supposed to provide a more realistic conversation. The pen was a freebie from E3 and not related to this story except as a catalyst for a bad pun.

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Windows CD-ROM

EVERYONE
B
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATS



RANKED ON U.S. UNITS SOLD MAY 1998

**1 TEKKEN 3** NAMCO**2 GRAN TURISMO RACING** SONY**3 NEED FOR SPEED III** ELECTRONIC ARTS**4 TRIPLE PLAY '99** ELECTRONIC ARTS**5 MLB '99** SONY**6 TOMB RAIDER** EIDOS**7 BREATH OF FIRE III** CAPCOM**8 RESIDENT EVIL 2** CAPCOM**9 CRASH BANDICOOT** SONY**10 WCW NITRO** THQ

Tekken 3 still holds firm at number one; racing fans are lapping up quality driving games. \$20 for Tomb Raider looks pretty sweet, too.

top ten best selling nintendo 64 titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MAY 1998

1 1080 SNOWBOARDING NINTENDO**2 NBA COURTSIDE** NINTENDO**3 GOLDENEYE 007** NINTENDO**4 MLB KEN GRIFFEY JR.** NINTENDO**5 YOSHI'S STORY** NINTENDO**6 SUPER MARIO 64** NINTENDO**7 MARIO KART 64** NINTENDO**8 RAMPAGE W.T.** MIDWAY**9 WCW VS. NWO** THQ**10 CRUISIN' USA** MIDWAY

Game-starved Nintendo owners buy any quality game they see... sporting titles and a little Rare magic are up for grabs



top ten best selling saturn titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MAY 1998

**1 HOUSE OF THE DEAD** SEGA**2 NBA LIVE '98** EA**3 PANZER SAGA** SEGA**4 SONIC R** SEGA**5 TOMB RAIDER** EIDOS**6 NBA ACTION '98** SEGA**7 LAST BRONX** SEGA**8 STREET FIGHTER** CAPCOM**9 QUAKE** SEGA**10 JP: THE LOST WORLD** SEGA

As the Saturn slumps in the U.S., one entertaining port-over survives the multitude of titles never destined for our shores...

top ten best selling pc titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MAY 1998

1 STARCRAFT BLIZZARD**2 UNREAL MMX** GT INTERACTIVE**3 DEER HUNTER** WIZARDWORKS**4 TITANIC** CYBERFLIX**5 MIGHT & MAGIC 6** NEW WORLD COMPUTING**6 BIG GAME HUNTER** HEAD GAMES**7 MYST** BRODERBUND**8 DEER HUNTER:E.S.** WIZARDWORKS**9 ARMY MEN** 3DO**10 NASCAR TRACK** SIERRA SPORTS

Proving that there's more real-time strategy fans than ever before, Starcraft holds off the mighty Unreal... and an inexplicable trio of hunting titles.



top ten overall console

FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 1998

1 TEKKEN 3-ps NAMCO**2 GRAN TURISMO-ps** SONY**3 1080 SNOWBOARDING-ps** NINTENDO**4 NBA COURTSIDE-ps** NINTENDO**5 NEED FOR SPEED III-ps** EA**6 GOLDENEYE 007-ps** NINTENDO**7 KEN GRIFFEY JR.-ps** NINTENDO**8 TRIPLE PLAY '99-ps** EA**9 MLB '99-ps** SONY**10 TOMB RAIDER-ps** EIDOS

world republic top ten games



- 1 WORLD SOCCER PS
- 2 XI PS
- 3 COMBINATION SOCCER PS
- 4 FIFA '98 PS
- 5 SOCCER TEAM MANAGER '98 SS

[RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MAY 1998]

- 6 DOUBLE CAST SS
- 7 DEKOTRA LEGEND PS
- 8 LANGRISSER SS
- 9 WORLD CUP '98 SS
- 10 POCKET FIGHTER PS



- 1 PREMIER MANAGER '98 PC
- 2 WORLD CUP '98 PS
- 3 GRAN TURISMO PS
- 4 THREE LIONS PS
- 5 SPICE WORLD PS

[RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JUNE 1998]



gamers' republic top ten games

FOR THE MONTH OF JULY 1998



d. halverson



- 1 BANJO-KAZOOIE N64
- 2 WILD 9 PS
- 3 F-ZERO X N64
- 4 MEDIEVIL PS
- 5 BUCK BUMBLE N64
- 6 BRAVE FENCER PS
- 7 RADIANT SILVERGUN SS
- 8 PENNY RACERS N64
- 9 MISCHIEF MAKERS N64
- 10 F-ZERO SNES



d. hodeson



- 1 METAL GEAR SOLID PS
- 2 HALF-LIFE PC
- 3 BANJO-KAZOOIE N64
- 4 REQUIEM PC
- 5 F-ZERO X N64
- 6 RADIANT SILVERGUN SS
- 7 C&C2 TIBERIAN SUN PC
- 8 QUAKE 2 PC
- 9 RIDGE RACER REV. PS
- 10 GEX 64 N64



b. sieclnter



- 1 BANJO-KAZOOIE N64
- 2 RADIANT SILVERGUN SS
- 3 F-ZERO X N64
- 4 DRACULA X SS
- 5 PARASITE EVE PS
- 6 WILD 9 PS
- 7 HALF-LIFE PC
- 8 GRIM FANDANGO PC
- 9 ISS '98 N64
- 10 GAME DAY '99 PS



d. rees



- 1 HALF-LIFE PC
- 2 BANJO-KAZOOIE N64
- 3 RADIANT SILVERGUN SS
- 4 HERETIC 2 PC
- 5 COMMANDOS PC
- 6 DESCENT: FREESPACE PC
- 7 GRIM FANDANGO PC
- 8 SHADOW TOWER PS
- 9 FALLOUT 2 PC
- 10 UNREAL PC



m. hobbs



- 1 F-ZERO X N64
- 2 RADIANT SILVERGUN SS
- 3 BANJO-KAZOOIE N64
- 4 POCKET FIGHTER PS
- 5 PANZER SAGA SS
- 6 DRACULA X SS
- 7 HALF-LIFE PC
- 8 SHINING FORCE 3 SS
- 9 SUPER METROID SNES
- 10 F-ZERO SNES



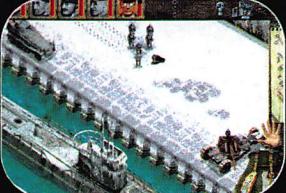
m. grissin



- 1 RADIANT SILVERGUN SS
- 2 F-ZERO X N64
- 3 TECHNOMOTOR SS
- 4 CONTRA H.C. GENESIS
- 5 BATMAN&ROBIN GENESIS
- 6 BUSHIDO BLADE 2 PS
- 7 SHINING FORCE 3 SS
- 8 CRISIS BEAT PS
- 9 HALF-LIFE PC CD-ROM
- 10 THRILL KILL PS



r. lockhart



- 1 COMMANDOS PC
- 2 DESCENT: FREESPACE PC
- 3 DARK MESSIAH PS
- 4 RADIANT SILVERGUN SS
- 5 TOTAL ANNIHILATION PC
- 6 POCKET FIGHTER SS
- 7 LINDA 3 SS
- 8 QUAKE 2 PC
- 9 STAR OCEAN SNES
- 10 DRACULA X SS



b. williams



- 1 BANJO-KAZOOIE N64
- 2 F-ZERO X N64
- 3 VAMPIRE SAVIOR SS
- 4 POCKET FIGHTER PS
- 5 RADIANT SILVERGUN SS
- 6 F-ZERO SNES
- 7 SF2 ZERO GOLD SS
- 8 HELLO KITTY PS
- 9 X-MEN VS. SF SS
- 10 YOSHI'S ISLAND SNES

TECHFRONT

Now that you understand the technology in today's game systems, take a glimpse into the hype and reality of the upcoming DreamCast console, and temper your feverish anticipation with a strong dose of knowledge...

BY BRIAN OSSERMAN

GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES: HERE COMES THE SEGA DREAMCAST!

HOPE OR HYPE?

With all the hype surrounding the announcement of Sega's next console, gamers have been inundated with unexplained catch-phrases like "modifier volumes" and "anisotropic filtering." And without explanations, who's to say whether such features will make a big impact on actual games, or be the next "blast processing?" Last month, we gave a broad overview of the Dreamcast, and this month, we hope to put to rest any uncertainty or confusion by discussing what the Dreamcast's main graphical features are, and how they will affect what you see on the screen.

TEXTURES, SHADING, AND ANTIALIASING: MORE AND BETTER!

Some features of the Dreamcast have been discussed in previous columns, like bump mapping, trilinear filtering, specular highlights, environment mapping, and supersampling. However, it is worth commenting on some aspects of the Dreamcast's implementation of these. While the Nintendo64 does specular highlights only on triangle vertices, and then Gouraud shades the triangle, the Dreamcast will actually support highlights calculated non-linearly across the polygon, making for a much more realistic effect. The

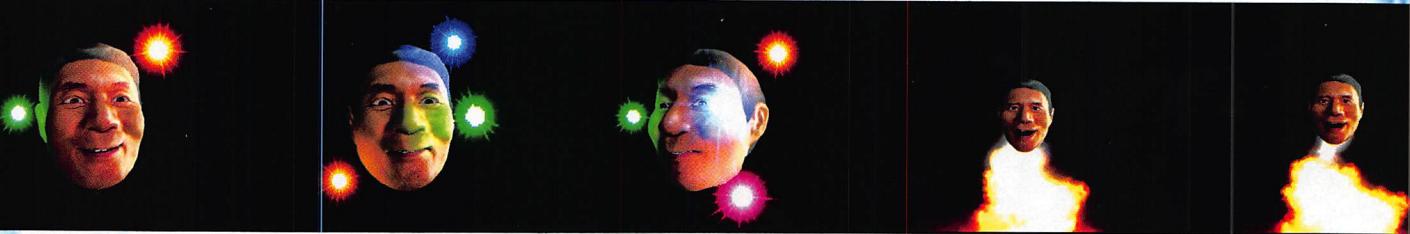
Dreamcast is also designed to make real-time environment mapping possible, in the sense that it will be feasible to render the "surroundings" texture, normally done in advance, on the fly. This is facilitated by the fact that texture memory is combined with the frame buffer, which is where rendered pictures go; therefore, the surroundings of an object

may be rendered and then immediately used as a texture for that object without having to move it somewhere else first. Lastly, the Dreamcast has the capability to do full-screen, supersampling antialiasing. In other words, the entire screen is rendered at four times the display resolution, and then each pixel is displayed as the average of four colors. Since this is over the entire screen, it not only serves to provide edge antialiasing, but also helps textures avoid shimmering and the Moire effect, and generally serves to soften harsh pixel boundaries.



ANISOTROPIC FILTERING & OTHER MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE

A feature that has not come up in past columns is anisotropic filtering, a type of texture filtering. Generic texture mapping uses a "closest texel" filter, where every pixel is colored as the color of the most accurate texel. Bilinear filtering improves on this by averaging the colors of the four nearest pixels. Mip-mapping is used on top of these filters to combat the Moire effect on far away textures, but mipmapping is an incomplete solution since it only takes overall detail level into account. The clas-



DREAMCAST WILL SUPPORT HIGHLIGHTS CALCULATED NON-LINEARLY ACROSS THE POLYGON
LOOK FOR THE OVERALL PICTURE QUALITY ON YOUR TELEVISION TO LOOK BETTER



DESIGNED TO MAKE REAL-TIME ENVIRONMENT MAPPING POSSIBLE

sic situation that it can't handle is when a polygon is close but at a sharp angle with the viewer, so that it is stretched in one direction - for instance vertically - and compressed in the other. Ideally, it would be detailed vertically but not horizontally, since the polygon will be much taller than it will be wide; but mip-mapping can't change horizontal detail without changing vertical detail as well. Anisotropic filtering takes a much less simplistic approach, which, when appropriate, averages over different texels in a non-linear way. The non-linearity helps reduce the blocky look that persists to some extent, even using bilinear filtering. This makes text appear much better in textures than it does otherwise. The fact that it can average over a much more flexible set of texels than mip-mapping helps reduce the Moire effect, even in situations where mip-mapping is helpless. Ultimately, anisotropic filtering can substantially improve image quality, but it is fairly computational, so don't expect developers to use it in scenes with a lot of fast motion, where you wouldn't have much time to appreciate the smoother look.

MODIFIER VOLUMES: MORE ABOUT LIGHT THAN BOOKS

A major innovation of the Dreamcast's PowerVR-based graphics architecture is a feature dubbed "modifier volumes." These allow developers to specify models that, rather than being drawn as actual objects, affect the shading of other objects that intersect them. The major applications of this idea are to shadows and rays of light, which can both be done convincingly in real time. For shadows, an object can have a modifier volume attached to it that extends from the object away from the light source and causes other polygons that are inside to be drawn darker. Alternatively, a win-

dow could have a modifier volume extending into a room, which brightens everything it hits. These will be a substantial improvement over existing shadow techniques because they will shadow any objects as necessary, while most previous techniques only cast shadows onto floors and other static surfaces. Even better, the technology is flexible, so watch for developers to use it creatively for completely original effects.

BRINGING BETTER PICTURES TO POORER SCREENS

A subtler point is that the Dreamcast will use a newly developed digital video encoder technology that converts the digital video output to a television signal. Every console has to do this somehow, but how it does so varies from console to console, and converting a high resolution picture to the limited NTSC standard while maintaining the image quality as best as possible is a tricky business. Sega claims they have found a better way to do this, so look for the overall picture quality on your television to look somewhat better than it does on other consoles.

MORE THINGS TO KNOW AND FORGET

The Dreamcast also features some notable "behind the scenes" features which will not make qualitative differences to what's on the screen, but may nonetheless provide a better overall gaming experience. One such feature is texture compression, which means that textures will be stored in a compressed format in memory, so that many more textures can be stored in a given amount of RAM than would otherwise be possible. Given that the Dreamcast already features 8 MB of video RAM, this means that you can expect to see games with much richer texturing.

CHIPS, ANYONE?

Another aspect of the Dreamcast, which is not immediately visible, is that it takes a somewhat different design philosophy than most hardware 3D engines: it moves much more of the setup work from the CPU to the graphics hardware. More specifically, on a typical graphics setup, the CPU is responsible for figuring out which polygons it wants to draw, and where they go on the screen (and often, how they should be shaded), and then tells the graphics hardware to render each polygon individually. However, the PowerVR hardware is set up so that the CPU simply gives the graphics hardware a list of polygons to deal with, and the graphics hardware figures out where they go on the screen, how to shade them, which ones to draw, and then draws them. What this means is that accomplishing a particular rendering task will be much less work for the CPU than it would be with other designs, leaving more CPU time for artificial intelligence, physics models, and so forth.

READ THE FINE PRINT, THEN JUST IGNORE IT!

As with any piece of hardware, there is plenty of room for the specs to be misleading. Quantitative specs like "3 million polygons per second" are the least dependable because so many factors affect rendering speed, but even qualitative features like those discussed above can end up having relatively little impact if, for instance, developers opt not to use a particular feature because it is too computational. Ultimately, the proof is in the pixels, but it is certainly fair to say that all indications suggest the Dreamcast will be a very powerful machine, with a variety of exciting features making games look unlike anything ever before seen on console.

Brian Osserman is a third year student at Harvard University studying mathematics and computer science, and has been playing video games and programming for as long as he can remember, starting with Logo on an Atari 800 in 1st grade.



ANISOTROPIC FILTERING CAN REDUCE THE MOIRE EFFECT EVEN IN SITUATIONS WHERE MIP-MAPPING IS HELPLESS ULTIMATELY, THE PROOF IS IN THE PIXELS



EXPECT TO SEE GAMES WITH MUCH RICHER TEXTURING THAN ANYTHING YOU'VE SEEN BEFORE ON A CONSOLE

command & conquer tiberian sun

By Ryan Lockhart

Forget Red Alert, the true sequel to Command & Conquer has arrived...



Command & Conquer 2. Sure, the final packaging might not have those exact words, but that's essentially what C&C: Tiberian Sun is - the official sequel to one of the most popular, and best selling, real time strategy games in the world.

We recently made a trip to Westwood's Vegas offices to get a closer look at their latest project - a game many are already calling the PC event of 1998 - and walked away just a bit more than impressed. Over the next five pages we'll give you an inside look at *Command & Conquer 2*, and answer the question of what aliens, mutants, random weather effects, and the voice of Darth Vader all have in connection to the future of RTS gaming.

Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun will re-define Real Time Strategy

It's been 20 years since the original *Command & Conquer*, and while GDI won that conflict, they quickly discover that their problems didn't end with Kane's death. Tiberium is growing out of control, and despite the battles that ensued in the past, no one notices the volatile growth until it is too late. Suddenly Tib, which was originally seen as nothing more than a valuable mineral, is connected with hundreds of diseases. When the effects of Tiberium start becoming even more threatening and actually turn affected people into horrible mutations, GDI is called in to start transporting citizens from the western countries to Antarctica, where the "plant" has trouble growing. It's at this point that the game begins, with a mission based around a fallen alien craft.

Like in the original C&C, you can take the role of a member of either the GDI or Nod forces. If you play as the

GDI commander Mc'Neal, your motivation is simple: stamp out a new outbreak of Nod attacks and examine exactly what's behind the rampant growth of Tiberium. Playing Nod, on the other hand, is a bit more interesting. As Slovic, you know Kane is still alive. With his help you'll first have to battle your former comrades to unite the Brotherhood of Nod, and then fight back the GDI forces to recover what you can of the sudden appearances of alien technology. While we don't want to give away too much of the storyline, the pieces of the script we've seen are amazing, complete with a fair share of surprises. The plot is slowly unfolded with the use of tons of high-quality rendered and live action cinemas, scripted in-game events, and movies that will play during missions in your sidebar.

Along with the addition of a strong storyline, the most

Continued over the page...



Incredible detail is found both in graphics and gameplay

important thing to Westwood was to make this an enjoyable experience for dedicated *Command & Conquer* players, and in doing this they tried to keep the feel as close as possible to the original. The basic game formula hasn't changed; there's still Tiberium to harvest, an army to build, and an enemy to overcome. Overall, *C&C2* is a very familiar game. This isn't to say, of course, that there haven't been changes. Besides an incredible graphic overhaul and the addition of tons of all new vehicles and buildings, the gameplay has been updated substantially. Name a complaint you have with the original *C&C*, and there's a good chance it's been fixed. Tank rushes, while still possible, are no longer quite as practical with the larger maps and faster, more efficient base defense building. Harvesters have better AI and stay away from danger areas, soldiers will automatically come to the aid of attacked comrades (or totally ignore them if you wish), and with the addition of new seeker droids and deployable radar units, even that damn last stealth tank your "friend" has hidden is easier to locate.

As of this writing, there are 14 units for both forces, and while some are older (or refitted), most of them are totally original. GDI's tanks have been updated to mechs and hovercrafts, Nod's stealth aspects have been taken one step further with new tunneling vehicles, and there's even one new super secret unit that... well, let's just say it looks intimidating and carries an unusual restriction. There are now tanks that can temporarily transform into immobile gun towers, flying carryalls that have the ability to rescue harvesters or damaged units from the battlefield, and a powerful dis-

rupter cannon that takes out everything in its path, friend or foe. Even the way you use vehicles has changed, the most notable aspect of this is the now-volatile harvester. Depending on how much Tib it carries in its belly, these slow moving vehicles are potentially rolling bombs, and could be used offensively if needed.

Besides the bevy of improvement made to *C&C2*, the most noticeable is the graphics. Wisely deciding to forgo an accelerator-requiring polygon-based 3D engine, Westwood were able to keep the incredible detail you see here along with the utilization of their proprietary Voxel engine for 3D objects. Of course, this doesn't mean the background is just a flat, lifeless object: the terrain can be deformed with explosions, waterfalls animate, shockwaves race across the land as buildings fall, ice covered streams in the snow levels can be driven over until they crack apart before slowly freezing again. And the most impressive example of modifying the background are bridges that can be demolished to stop an advancing enemy, or quickly rebuilt using an engineer. The terrain even affects the way the game is played, as units will



As a small Nod force invades this sprawling GDI base, you can see the expansion pods around the power plants that allow them to be easily upgraded.

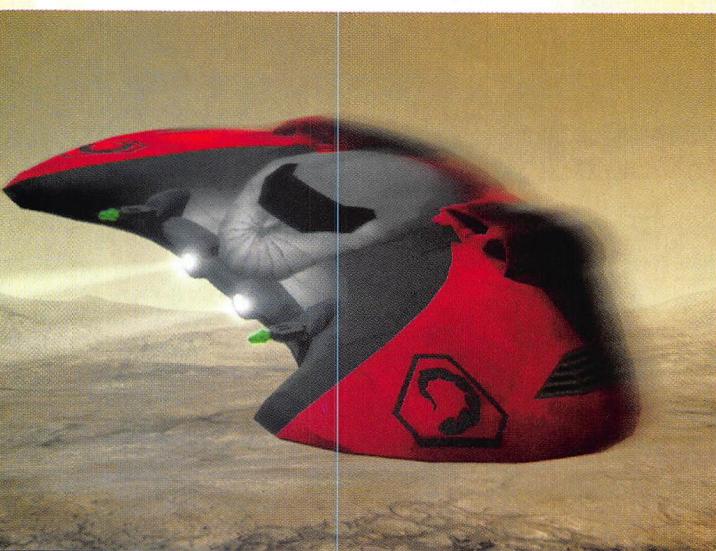


A first for any real time strategy game, Command & Conquer 2's new engine allows for units to exist in the same area on different levels, as these bridge shots display.

What is the alien connection?

Aliens. Ok, perhaps these little green men are a bit over-used in absolutely everything lately, but their involvement in *Command & Conquer* goes far beyond just a simple invasion. As the game progresses, you'll be given clues to exactly what the aliens want, why they planted Tiberium here in the first place, and what this could mean to the third, and final, part of the *C&C* trilogy.

However, you won't have much direct alien contact in *C&C2*, other than a few scout ships, but you will see quite a bit of their technology. One of the coolest new vehicles in the game is a Nod alien craft, developed using parts found from a downed ship. This small disc can hover in the air and fire surprisingly destructive blasts.



New vehicles can be otherworldly in nature.



16-bit colored lighting is displayed in this night mission shot. Notice how the light actually seems to be emitting from within the base itself.

move much quicker on paved roads than they would across Tiberium, and driving into craters will cause them to lose formation. The vehicles themselves have also gone through a total graphics overhaul, and are now comprised totally of Voxels, allowing them to have more realistic movements as they react to the terrain, shake from side to side when being hit, and even burst into pieces when destroyed. To help the mood in the many night-based missions, Westwood also added 16-bit high-color lighting to C&C's quickly growing number of new features. Colored hues cover bases, fed from the many light sources throughout the structures, which can be destroyed to assist surprise assaults. There's also an alpha channel, which allows an impressive 63 shades of black in a small area, that slowly darkens units as they enter shadowed or night areas. Even the smallest of effects, like the way fire realistically spews from flame tanks and how turrets now move to "track" their targets, all just remind you exactly how polished the game is.

It's needless to say *Command & Conquer: Tiberium Sun* is an important title for Westwood, and they are certainly doing everything they can to insure its success. Erik Yeo, one of the original game designers behind C&C, has been working on this title for over three years - and it shows. The attention to detail in both the graphics and gameplay is staggering, and the amount of energy going into the title just radiates. I need to see this game again. My god, November is just too far away.

New maps can be made almost instantly

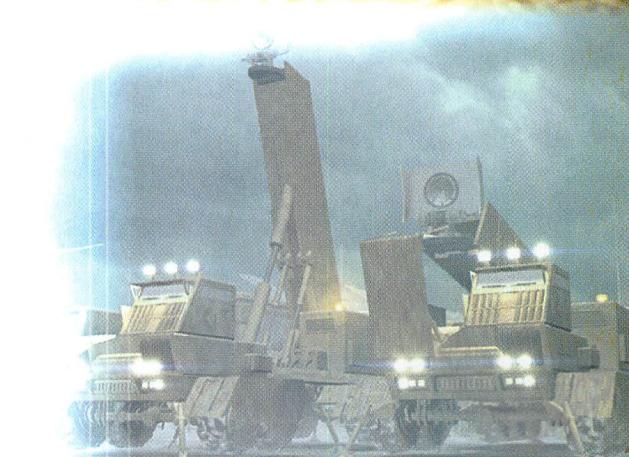
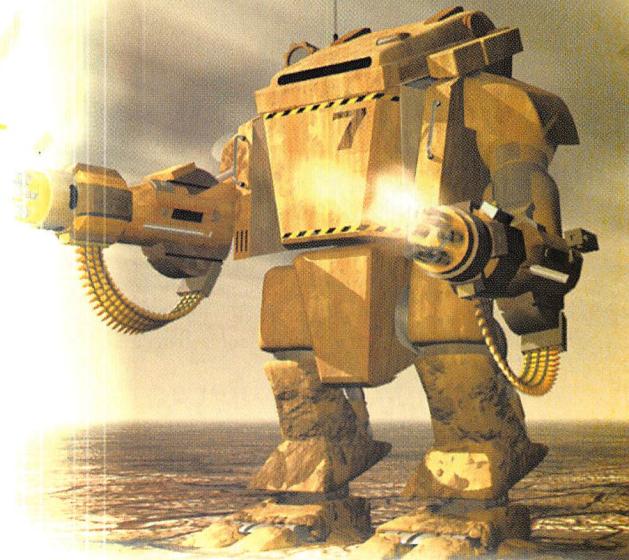
Random Map Generator:

In my opinion, one of the few glaring problems with the original C&C's multiplayer game was the lack of a map editor. Apparently I'm not alone on this, and in response to all of the suggestions they've received over the years, Westwood are actually going one step further, and are including the first fully random map generator. Think about it - how long does it take you to make a map in *StarCraft*? Er, a good map. Now, imagine an easy to use slide icon that allows you to adjust the size of the play-field along with the amount of water, cliffs, open space, Tiberium, or ice (for snow levels). Then, after hitting a button, you have a new map generated in a matter of seconds! And, if you don't like it, play with the interface a bit, and create something new. The amount of maps you could produce with this is unlimited, meaning you could

have a new playfield every time you play, or save off your favorite selections for future battles.

Continued over the page...

Huge explosions rock the battlefield below, and if you look closely you can see the shockwaves that follow.

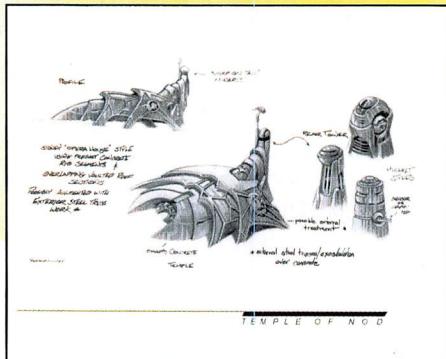


Mission structure

Actually based on a non-linear mission tree, Westwood wove the game around major plot points, allowing you to make many decisions throughout the game that could drastically affect the overall story and flow of C&C2. Case in point, you have the choice to take out your opponent's long-range radar station, or to ignore the mission and just keep heading towards his base. If you choose to take the station out first, his base won't be on alert status when you eventually arrive, and you might get a bit more of the story in the mean-time. There will be a minimum of 13 to 14 missions for each side, but you could potentially see around 20.



Building better bases



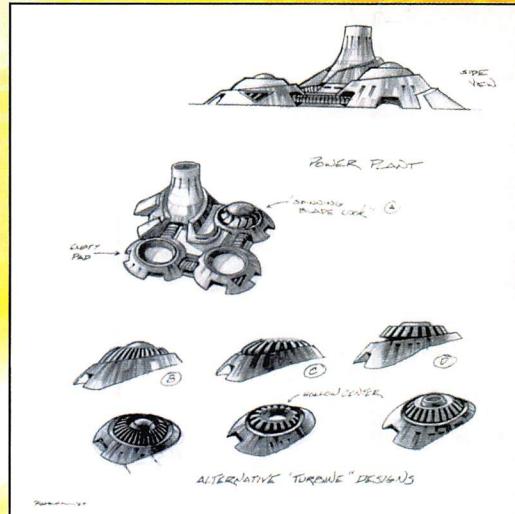
Early design documents give you an inside look at the detail that went into the creation of updated buildings (above).

Structures can now be upgraded with ease (right).

Base creation and management are just two more of the aspects that went through a major overhaul in C&C2, as you now have more control over your structures, enabling you to upgrade their abilities or modify their power usage with ease. But let's start with the basic improvements - most things build quicker. You have money for a turret? Click on the icon and you'll have one in seconds, which enables you to build defenses quickly to avoid

tank rushes. Walls now have more of a use than they did in the original game, as they are utilized to not only keep out enemy units (which they are quite effective at), but to block off the fast growing Tiberium from sprawling into your base. To make it even easier to use walls, Westwood are working on a way to have these structures nearly build themselves. Many of the actual buildings can be upgraded by adding parts, nicknamed the "Lego Effect." Think of it this way: when you want to make a guard tower, the first thing you build is its base. The gun itself can be added at any time, and by the same token, sold if you want to add a different weapon later. The buildings themselves are upgraded by adding "parts" to indentations they have on their sides. You want more energy? Instead of building another power plant, just buy an upgrade disk and slap it into your existing structure. This upgrading system is great for two different reasons: they keep your base from becoming overcrowded as you won't

have to add new structures, and the structures themselves also look damn cool with added appendages. Another nice improvement to base management is the ability to control the power flow to your buildings. If you see yourself running low on power, and need to keep essential structures on-line (such as your base defenses), you can simply turn off other parts of your base while another plant or upgrade is being built. The final game might even give you the option to transform your construction yard back into its original vehicle form, enabling you to move and start the creation on a second base in a different area.



Random weather effects

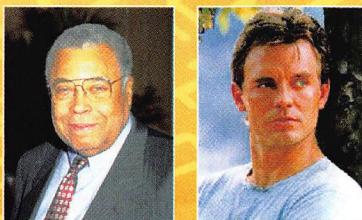
In order to bring a bit more unpredictable game elements to C&C, Westwood have added random weather effects, which go far beyond simple rain. The first, labeled the Ion Storm, bathes lightning across the playfield, and knocks out anything that uses a high amount of electricity to run: base defenses could go down, stealth tanks suddenly become visible, hover tanks drop to the ground, and everything suddenly goes a bit haywire for a few minutes. The other major effect, the Meteor Shower, isn't exactly weather related, but adds just as much instantaneous chaos as the Ion Storm. Huge chunks of rock rain from the sky and hit certain areas of the ground, totally destroying anything in their path and deforming the actual terrain drastically.



Yet even more new details revealed...

Movie Magic

Westwood Studios is a very cool building, with its strangely colored walls, Victorian-styled rest area, and well equipped film studio. It's in this large structure, located just a few feet from the main building, where they are hard at work on the movie portions of *Command & Conquer 2*. And instead of those bluescreen tragedies that plague too many games lately, the cinemas in *C&C2* are filmed around actual full-sized sets, complete with real actors. Two of the biggest names cast for this project are James Earl Jones (*Star Wars*), and Michael Bean (*Terminator, Aliens*), both of whom are familiar to Sci-Fi acting. Hmm... A title with both amazing gameplay and well-acted cinematics could be a first.



While good actors normally aren't associated with video games, Westwood hopes to change that with Command & Conquer 2.

Upgrading characters

Similar in a way to *Total Annihilation*, your troops in *C&C2* can gain "experience" points for kills, which allow them to be upgraded. Of course, in *TA*, this only improved their aim, whereas in *C&C2* they actually learn new abilities and change appearance. Unlike the previous *C&Cs*, your basic soldiers for both sides become infinitely more valuable on the field, and if you can keep them alive long enough, you'll have more powerful and smarter soldiers to show for your troubles. GDI troops will eventually transform into "jump jet infantry" (final name is still pending), which will allow them to hover in the air, and pelt ground forces from above. NOD men will transform into a cyborg commando, a chameleon spy who can't be seen while standing still. He can be ordered into different enemy buildings to "hack" into them, resulting in a random event depending on the structure you pick - such as giving you the ability to produce a vehicle your opponent has, see his power level, or even intercept messages in multiplayer games. And the best part is, the other player won't know he's been hacked... at least until he sees his own type of vehicles gunning him down. Westwood are experimenting quite a bit with this cyborg commando, even toying around with advanced routines that would force his "EVA" to say certain things like, "Nod attacking from north," while you mount an attack from the south.

No mammoth tanks?

Unfortunately, at this time, you can't build Mammoth Tanks. Even though they appeared in early screenshots (see below), these popular units were only used as placeholders for unfinished Nod vehicles. Apparently quite a few alarmed *C&C* fans wrote in to Westwood after this shot was published, questioning why in god's name Nod had control of this famous GDI unit. There still might be Mammoth Tanks in the final version, but perhaps only accessible in certain missions. Of course, if enough people complain, you may very well see these tanks make an appearance in future expansion packs.



Multiplayer anyone?

Westwood are taking extra care of the multiplayer aspects of *C&C2*, implementing an easier-to-use Westwood Chat and an instant map builder right into the interface. They also are giving you more options on how you play your games on-line. Sure, there's still those groovy four player TCP and eight player IPX connections for hardcore head-to-head gameplay, but now you and a friend can team up against the computer in co-op play. Random boxes still litter the playfield, but there are a few new surprises along with the classic Ion Cannon and Airstrikes (not to mention cash), most notable the Battery Crate. This item, when found, appears on your sidebar and can keep you energized for a short time, even if your power plants are destroyed.

The sounds of War

EVA, the cold (yet sexy) voice from the original game is back, making even the most basic of events somehow sound erotic, but only if you play as GDI. On the other hand, Nod have a slightly darker voice to help them out. Labeled CABAL, which stands for Computer Assisted Bio-engineered Artificial Lifeform (of course), the original version was so evil he actually had to be toned down, as he was actually overshadowing Kane in the reading of the script. In a cool effect, his voice is multi-layered, made up of five discordant sources. Always referring to himself as "we," CABAL is made up of five computers, all controlled by one organic brain. These EVAs also give more specific information, such as alerting you when your harvester is under attack, or from which side of the base is being pelted by your opponent.

The sound effects themselves are also more detailed, and Westwood have added contact sensitive voices. "Marines! We are LEAVING!" is just one of the many things you might hear as you pull your troops back, and they'll scream orders or alert you of immediate problems on the battlefield.

The Future of Command & Conquer

As I've indicated elsewhere in this preview, the *Command & Conquer* saga certainly won't end here. The Nod and GDI conflict will rage on through upcoming add-on packs for *C&C2*, not to mention the eventual final part of the trilogy. While *Command & Conquer: Tiberian Twilight* might still be a few years off, rumors are already beginning to spread. Could a third faction make an appearance? We'll just have to wait and see...





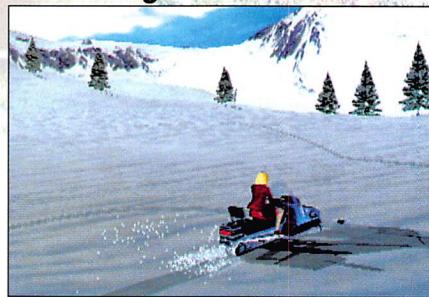
d2

by Mike Griffin



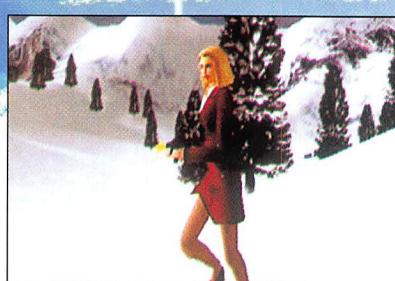
It is Christmas day in Canada, in the year 1999. A horrifying story begins as a young woman called Laura experiences a strange vision while on a passenger plane flying over the frigid Canadian wilderness. In a dream-like state, she sees an enormous flaming meteorite plummeting towards the earth. As her vision intensifies, she is snapped out of her trance as a terrorist attack sends machine-gun fire ripping through the plane, forcing passengers into a wild panic. The chaotic screams intensify after Laura's dream is realized: a passing meteorite impacts the plane, sending it crashing into the icy mountain peaks. Laura lies unconscious, destined to perish. But she and other survivors are rescued by the enigmatic Kimberly, and the

Something abominable stirs beneath the frozen Canadian land



survivors struggle through heavy blizzards to her cabin. As Laura awakens, she sees a disgusting transformation of a survivor mutating into a horrific, tendrilled beast. She backs out of the cabin and runs. What is this bizarre being? Is the meteor tied to the human aberrations? Why has she experienced horrible premonitions? What will happen next? The following information will shed light on exactly what her journey will entail.

and now it has awakened!



The reason why Laura is packin'

D2 is not your typical gung-ho fire and forget game. The game will force you to seriously consider the repercussions of mindlessly shooting whenever you encounter another character. With this in mind, using a gun in *D2* becomes a necessity for the paranoid, but a powerful bargaining tool for the cunning.

The gun also serves another, incidental function in the game: it allows you to break the silence of the serene mountains with a piercing, echoing shot. As the day gives way to night, you'll light up the empty, quiet land with your powerful ricochetting bullets. Warp says this represents the power of civilization sparkling within Mother Nature's harsh, almost other-worldly climate. This kind of strange, spiritual symbolism is very common in Warp games.

Laura will use several kinds of weaponry. Unlike most games, however, Laura will start off with a very powerful gun that can shoot fast,

extremely powerful rounds similar to the artillery you see main characters firing in a John Woo film. These weapons will more than likely be scattered about the wreckage of the plane, courtesy of the well-equipped (and mostly dead) terrorists. Naturally there will be more powerful weapons available later, such as bazookas and rocket launchers, as even more hideous entities attempt to thwart your quest.

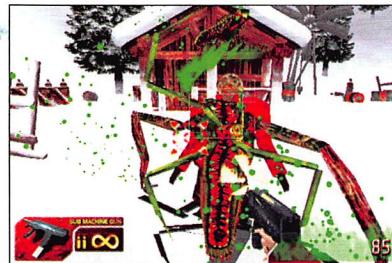
One of Warp's primary intentions is to elevate 3D shooting action to the next level of interaction. In battles, the game will use every possible field of view on the screen. You'll see a cinematic, dramatic set-up before the battle, elevating tensions for the upcoming fight. The perspective will zoom to the first-person, combining the skill of arcade gun games with minor elements of RPG battle systems. Additionally, there will be full replays of victorious fights. Warp's goal is to allow players to objectively view the battle and scrutinize their own methods.



Xenomorphic plant atrocities located... fire at will!

The purpose of the game is to find the enemies on your own. The enemies are those who have been mutated into plant beasts - creatures who have been taken over by strange plant genes on a cellular level. Quite often you'll encounter a creature and its true intentions will be unknown to you, because the extent of the mutation isn't clear. As previously mentioned, Warp wanted to instill a sense of complication and confusion each time you draw your weapon in defense. In other words, you have to carefully consider the state of your mission: Deal with your consciousness, or accomplish your mission regardless of moral or ethi-

cal dilemmas. To put it another way, Laura's affinity to her once-human plane companions can avert her from executing them when they turn green and vicious, attacking using tentacles, pollen, or poisonous seeds. If you defeat the enemy, it regresses into a beautiful flower and blooms. This symbolic intent is to strengthen Laura's mind, despite the destruction of another life form. Right now, only the humanoid variety of plant mutations has been introduced, but there are several other radically mutated monsters to fight. Sometimes the breed of monster will change based on the time of day, weather, and type of environment.



(Left) In this battle scene, we're given the first glimpse of the screen indicators used in D2. The flame shows the ratio of life that Laura has according to her HP total, located in the lower right corner of the screen. As her HP decrease with each attack, the color of the flame will change from green, to yellow, to red as the icon becomes smaller. The flame represents the state of Laura's energy under the severely cold weather conditions, an expression of Laura's body temperature. The icon in the lower left shows the current weapon in use.

The latest exclusive D2 screens reveal monsters and the new combat system

You sometimes have to fight several monsters at once, but as shown below, others will attack alone and in cunning ways. Monsters will never show up randomly; they are always hidden somewhere specific, in certain areas. As soon as you enter their immediate vicinity, the battle scene will begin. In this case, the beast is perched atop the roof waiting to ambush Laura. As you can see in the shots, the camera pans dramatically to follow the appearance of the monster.



(Above) In these shots we see the intense blood effects that shower the screen when Laura is slashed by a mutated beast. Similar to gun shooting games, the first-person perspective will always be reactive to physical attacks and missiles. The Dreamcast's filtering features will ensure that these effects (such as the blood and explosions) aren't pixelated in the least. Additionally, the game should be running at 60 fps, ensuring that the effects and creatures will be very smoothly animated.

Let's go technical info. Alias, Lightwave and Studio Max R2 used to create D2 CG.

Shozaburo Tateishi, one of the original CG artists from *D*, is now working on *D2* as lead CG director. His co-workers have often said that his endless optimism reflects the productive work ethic at Warp. He and fellow team members Eno, Hayashida, Miyazuki, and Sudo travelled to New Zealand last September to reunite the team and visit the snow-capped mountains. The entire team then visited Canada early this year to take notes and observe its northern regions. After that, the opening CG was sufficiently inspired and ready for production.

The team is using Light Wave to render *D2*'s CG, just as they did in *D*. Tateishi feels that the rendering quality of Light Wave is perfectly capable of displaying the atmosphere that they intend to achieve in *D2*. Recent game CG, he explained, has been using far too many different perspectives and lavish pictures, which is too extravagant for the kind of



CG Warp desires. They would rather create plain, simple, yet highly emotional pictures. Light Wave is fine for emotional characters, but for effect-intensive scenes such as explosions, Alias is the choice. It is more difficult to create CG using Alias, but the overall quality is very high. And finally, Warp is using 3D Studio Max to actually run the opening movie.

D2 launch no longer planned for November 20. Release expected sometime in early winter.

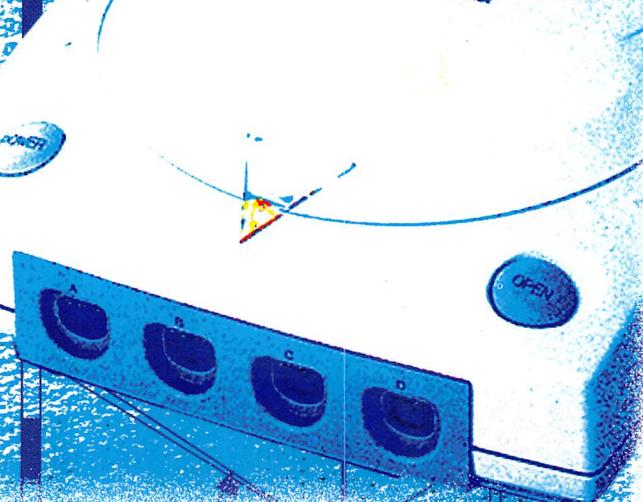
As you might have read in our Frontlines section, *D2* has been delayed. It will no longer be a launch title on November 20. While this is certainly disappointing news for fans everywhere, including myself, it

looks like a game this complex and revolutionary will be worth the wait. I have a feeling it will be one of those classic first-generation games that people will remember for a long, long time.

SEGA DREAMCAST

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD JACQUES

Dreamcast



"Imagine being able to arrange a piece of music for 64 different instruments and sounds..."



We recently spoke with one of Sega Europe's top sound producers, Richard Jacques. Besides being one of the nicest, most humble guys in the industry, Richard is also an avid gamer. At Sega Digital Studios, he enjoys top of the line equipment and gets to work with the likes of Sonic Team, Travellers Tales, and Bizzare Creations. He has produced music, in whole or in part, for the following games: *Shinobi X* (European version), *Darxide 32X*, *F1 Challenge* (European version), *Euro '96*, *Daytona CCE* (Saturn/PC), *Sonic 3D Blast* (Saturn/PC), *Worldwide Soccer '98*, *Sega Touring Car Championship*, and (love it or hate it) *Sonic R*. Some of his favorite game musicians include Tim Follin (of *Ghouls 'n Ghosts*, *Bionic Commando*, and *Batman & Robin* fame), Yuzo Koshiro (*Streets of Rage* series), Kenji Eno (*D*, *D2*), and his counterparts at Sega of Japan, responsible for the *Nights* and *Panzer Dragoon* soundtracks.

Richard has now moved on to multiple projects on the Dreamcast, where he hopes to make a name for himself. People haven't paid much attention to the Dreamcast sound hardware thus far, so we figured it was time to go in-depth with the help of a Sega insider. On with the interview...

Every hardware component inside the Dreamcast is absolutely, 100%, tailor-made for gaming. With this in mind, how does the Dreamcast's Yamaha AICA chip set compare to sound hardware in other consoles? Is it the ultimate sound chip for games?

Yes, this is certainly the best sound chip for a console at the moment. The Saturn and PS both had 512k of sound memory and a sound processor. The N64 does not have a dedicated sound processor, so there is always going to be a trade off between graphics speed, and how many channels of audio you can play at once. The

Dreamcast sound hardware uses a powerful 32bit RISC processor just to control the sound system, so graphics speed is never affected. The ADPCM memory compression (4:1) is done in hardware, so no CPU time is needed to decompress it, and it has some real nice DSP effects (delays and reverbs, etc.) found in some of Yamaha's synth modules. No other games console has included a hardware filter... ever!

When pushed all the way, how much memory compression can be applied to Dreamcast sound while still maintaining a high quality?

You could use all the sound memory [GR - 2mb] and use high-quality 16 bit 44.1khz samples, although this would eat up memory fairly quickly. You could use The ADPCM compression (4:1) on these if you wish. It is really in the hands of the sound creator/musician as to how good it will sound. I have been doing some demos recently, which use loads of sampled guitar sounds, as well as high quality keyboard samples and drums, and even compressed they sound great. This sort of quality has not been possible on a games console before.

How dramatically improved will the performance be thanks to 64 channels?

Very much so. It will mean that the musician/sound creator will not be restricted. Imagine being able to arrange a piece of music for 64 different instruments and sounds. It will sound very, very full. Also, in terms of sound effects, games that need lots of effects -for example, sports games - will be able to sound even more realistic by using more channels.

Do you expect to be producing more redbook audio, more chip-based audio, or equal portions of both?

Probably equal portions of both. My first project is using mainly CD audio

*Richard is probably best known for his controversial *Sonic R* soundtrack. Most people had a hard time accepting those sugar-coated vocals, even though the music beneath was excellent. He also did *Sonic 3D Blast*, which had a great, *Sonic Team* approved score. The bonus zone music, however, was all Richard Jacques' own funky style.*



for the music, but there will be some good chip music for the options screens. The sound effects will sound fantastic, though!

Is it capable of recreating theatre-style effects like Dolby Digital, DTS, THX, and Pro Logic?

As I understand it, Dolby Digital, THX and DTS all need a very high bandwidth bitstream, which is why Dolby Digital is only on Laserdisc and DVD. A CD system would not have the required bandwidth to stream all the information off. It will be a while until we see realtime encoding and decoding of these surround formats because of the sheer amount of processing involved. Dolby Pro Logic, however, is another matter. This is easier to produce because the information can be fit into a stereo audio output. Therefore, I am supporting Dolby Pro Logic on Dreamcast. I have all the encoding tools to produce a Dolby Pro Logic mix on CD, and we are working towards placing the sound effects in realtime. Of course, users will need a Dolby Pro Logic equipped TV or Hi Fi.

How does Dreamcast's sound hardware compare to high-end PC sound cards?

Very favorably. The DC sound chip can play back CD quality samples just like a PC sound card. Obviously, a good PC sound card costs around \$150, so the Dreamcast sound chip doesn't have on board sounds held in ROM chips, but again, it is how clever the sound creator can be.

How much music can the custom high-density discs hold?

In theory, you could fill the 1Gb CD all with music tracks, but in realistic terms, the game data will be larger than, say, the Saturn, due to larger and higher resolution textures. Realistically, I am planning to use

"You can get the maximum potential out of the system with a little ingenuity..."

around 800 to 850 meg of the CD for audio data. This is equivalent to around 85 minutes of CD audio! Yes, I will be very busy.

How complicated are the sound tools that Sega is providing developers? Do they show how to max-out the potential of the system, or do you think the kit will go through several revisions over time?

The tools are very good, and they were made in conjunction with Yamaha. They are easy to work with, and very flexible, so you can produce very simple or very complex sounds - it is up to you. So yes, I think they are very effective and versatile. You can get the maximum potential out of the system with a little ingenuity.

Do you think you'll be tackling sound for more Japanese games, or more European and US games?

All the games I work on will be for worldwide release, but every one will be developed in Europe.

When it comes to game music, what type do you prefer to create? What types of games do you prefer creating music for?

I would love to do an orchestral score for an adventure/RPG, but have not yet had the opportunity. Apart from that, I like writing pretty much anything.

And as for yourself, what type of music do you listen to?

I listen to almost everything. Jazz Funk - Incognito; Film Scores - John Williams, Danny Elfman, Hans Zimmer; Drum n Bass - LTJ Bukem; loads of house and garage, lots of jazz, lots of classical, etc... the list goes on and on!

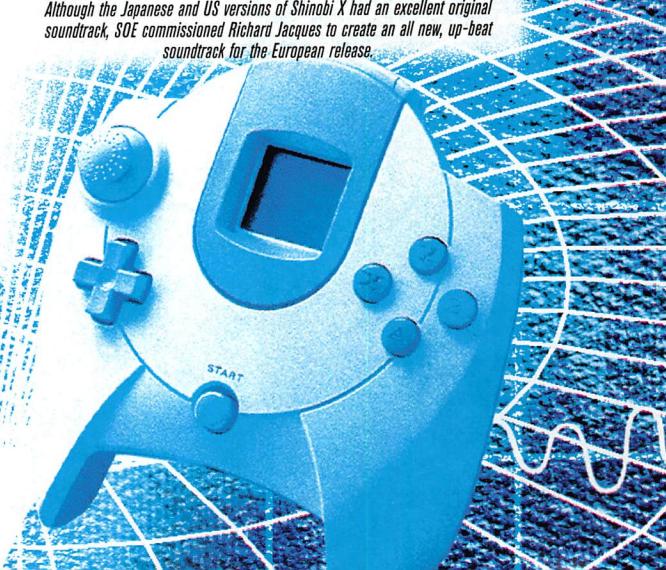
Well thanks very much for your time, and good luck with all your Dreamcast endeavors.



With Daytona CCE, Richard had to remix the all-time classic B-Univ tunes. Despite the pressure, he successfully infused the music with a perfectly funky and jazzy feel.



Although the Japanese and US versions of Shinobi X had an excellent original soundtrack, SOE commissioned Richard Jacques to create an all new, up-beat soundtrack for the European release.





Argonaut Software LTD., the gray matter behind the legendary SNES-FX title *Starfox* and the newest critter based romp on PlayStation and PC, *Croc*, are on to something big once again with *Buck Bumble*, only in a somewhat smaller package. A genetically enhanced cyber-bee with a license to kill, Buck's the government's smallest assassin. His mission is to thwart the efforts of a race of mutant insectoids (the result of a toxic waste spill some years before) bent on the complete annihilation of

buck bumble

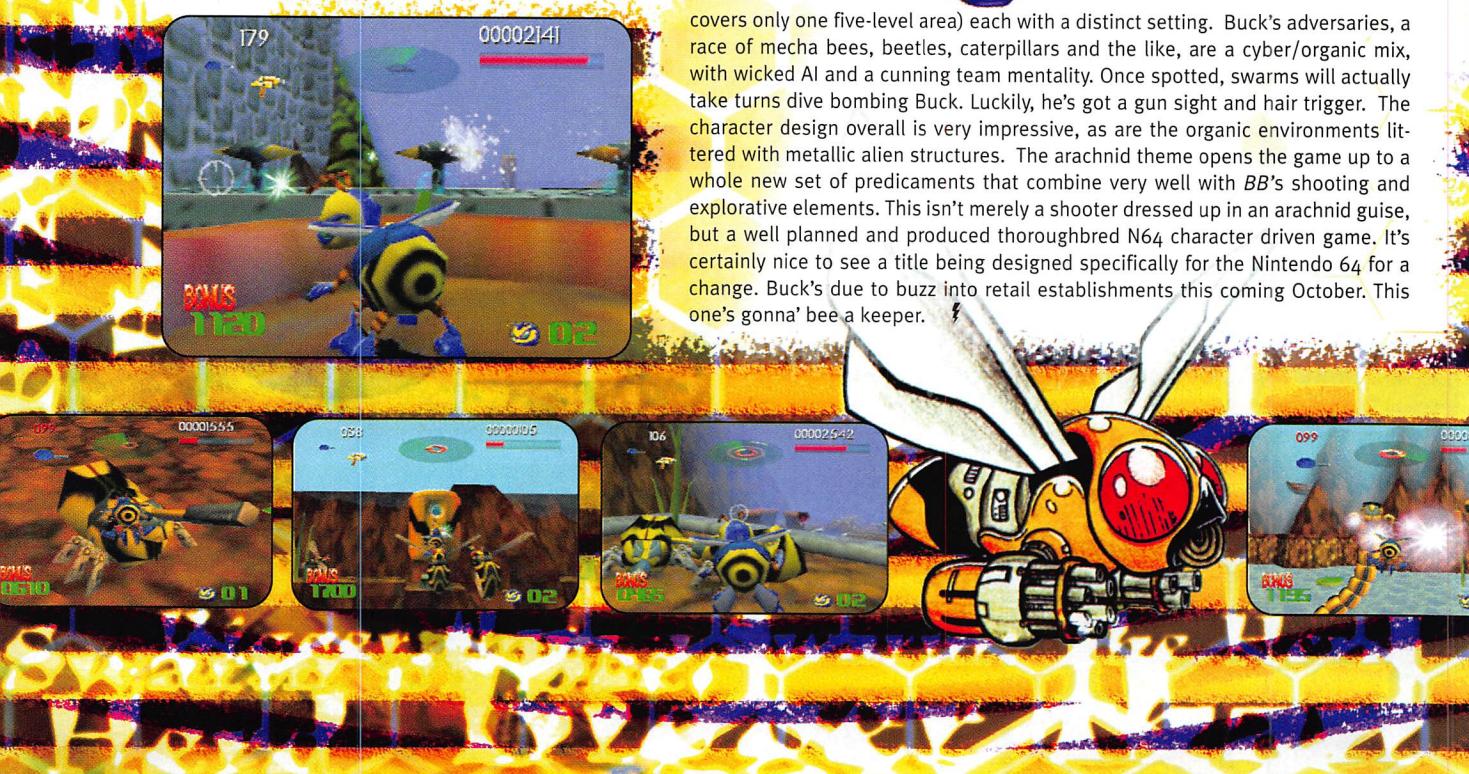
by Dave Halverson

Eliminate the Arachnid Threat!

Earth's natural insect communities and their habitats. With surgically implanted interchangeable limbs that can accept up to 15 types of weapons, two pairs of sticky high-top sneakers, and a cool pair of shades, he just might pull it off. There's a lot to like about this game, even after you've been completely spoiled by *Banjo-Kazooie*. You'll need to re-focus your retinal units for the return of foggy foregrounds, but no more than you would for any other third party game not created by Rare, Iguana, or Nintendo (the only three developers with Nintendo's advanced graphics tool kit). Perhaps the coolest aspect of *BB* is the fact that you're a bee. There's something very satisfying about buzzing around unrestricted within huge valleys, especially when the control is as tight as this. The gameplay's heading in the right direction, too, with a diversity of detailed missions (20+ in all, though our preview



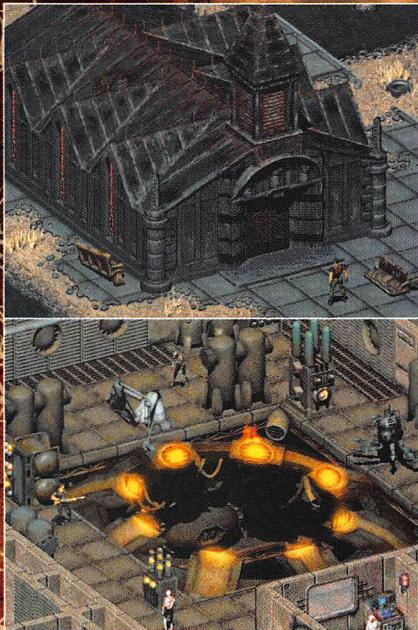
covers only one five-level area) each with a distinct setting. Buck's adversaries, a race of mecha bees, beetles, caterpillars and the like, are a cyber/organic mix, with wicked AI and a cunning team mentality. Once spotted, swarms will actually take turns dive bombing Buck. Luckily, he's got a gun sight and hair trigger. The character design overall is very impressive, as are the organic environments littered with metallic alien structures. The arachnid theme opens the game up to a whole new set of predicaments that combine very well with *BB*'s shooting and explorative elements. This isn't merely a shooter dressed up in an arachnid guise, but a well planned and produced thoroughbred N64 character driven game. It's certainly nice to see a title being designed specifically for the Nintendo 64 for a change. Buck's due to buzz into retail establishments this coming October. This one's gonna' bee a keeper.



A fascinating sequel beckons us all...

fallout 2

By Dave Rees



Interplay's Post Apocalyptic RPG continues



Post-apocalyptic Earth. A world that has fallen under the horrific destruction of an atomic war. A civilization exiled to a planet blanketed by an atmosphere of nuclear dust. Cities in ruins, corruption and crime running rampant, morals virtually non-existent. A society that is governed by instinct rather than rationale. Sound familiar?

Those who played Black Isle Studios' highly acclaimed RPG *Fallout* will surely remember this dire setting. In fact, as morbid as it is, it will likely bring about a wide grin on many faces. The game was a role playing experience unlike any other: a simple point-and-click interface made it easy to play, a highly original set of character traits

provided for unmatched character development, an exceptional visual and aural presence heightened the atmospheric condition, and an intense story provided a mature depiction of a man's struggle for survival beyond nuclear war. It received many accolades, including several "Role playing Game of the Year" awards for 1997. So, as one would expect, the upcoming sequel is highly anticipated among many PC owners.

Set to provide us with more of everything the original did, *Fallout 2* looks to deliver another riveting journey through a struggling, nuclear war-torn Earth, but with an all-new story and characters. Taking place 80 years after *Fallout* ended, players assume the role

of a character searching for an ancestor's vault to obtain a G.E.C.K. (Garden of Eden Creation Kit). But this quest will not be easy by any approach. Players should expect to travel to many locales, including a decrepit ghetto land, a ruined San Francisco, a crime ridden New Reno, and a contemporary town named Vault City. Although it doesn't appear to dramatically improve upon the original in any technical sense, it is apparent that enhancements were made where they were needed; most importantly of which are AI improvements, a new interface, a dated method of transportation, and, of course, a story that will surely mesmerize the masses all over again.

Fallout 2 is sure to be everything we loved about the first and then some. Who can argue with that? ☺

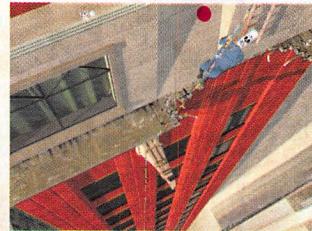


A glance at the renders below hints at the extraordinary style and intricate detail of Fallout 2

Grim Fandango has such a unique graphic and aural style that it will likely engage just about any gamer.



By Dave Rees

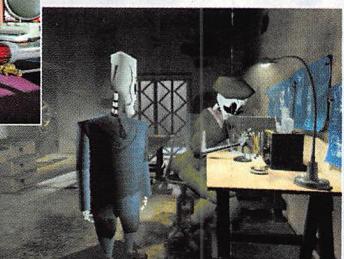


With more mystery, suspense, and humor than any other game of its type, Lucas Arts' Grim Fandango is set to take players on a journey that is likely to redefine how we look at interactive adventure games. The game utilizes a similar technology to Resident Evil - the environments are all pre-rendered, but the characters and objects you interact with are constructed of 3D polygons - but its presentation is so unique that comparing it to anything else is virtually unrealizable. The artwork, character designs, voice acting, and plot are so enthralling, after playing through a mere demo, gamers will likely suffer from withdrawal.

Set in a bizarre world born of Mexican folklore, you play as Manuel Calavera, a Grim Reaper of Mexican origin who ultimately seeks to free his soul from the grim world in which he currently dwells. To do this, "Manny" must attain his required number of "deaths." As you assume the role of Manuel, you realize this Land of the Dead is a do or die world, and competition is tough, requir-

ing you to find alternative methods of attaining your goals. Through your desperate attempts and investigations, you soon discover that your dark habitat is hopelessly corrupt and your chances of ever leaving are slim to none. But, of course, there is a way - you just have to work hard to find it.

At the very least, Grim Fandango looks to be an ambitious title with a highly original plot line, the kind of game that we only hope to see more of. Although your primary objective seems straightforward enough, reaching it certainly will not be, as the game presents a hefty 80 logical puzzles for you to solve; they won't require too much brainpower, just some common sense and perhaps a little patience. Add some brilliantly conceived dialogue that is wry yet poignant into the mix, and one can only expect to be highly entertained from start to finish. ☺



grim fandango

A dark, brooding atmosphere...

Indeed, *Heretic II* should be played on a dark moonlit night, with a cool breeze blowing through the window, a few candles lit, and nothing but the sounds of silence to embellish the experience. As the game opens, you wander away from a pier while the ocean water gently laps below you. Crickets creak and frogs croak, the cry of a baby echoes from afar, and moans of plagued souls pierce the air with distinction. The sound of a nearby mosquito encompasses you; eventually it lands on your neck, causing your character to squash the bug with a quick slap. Oil lamps delicately illuminate the nearby roadways into town, a sign creaks as it blows in the wind, and rats scamper into the sewers. A door is locked and blocks your progress, yet logic tells you to climb a nearby crate and subsequently vault onto a rooftop to reach a nearby courtyard. The atmosphere is overwhelming, but even so, there is more here than what meets the eye and ear.

Heretic II utilizes an enhanced version of the *Quake II* engine and thankfully retains the solid physics and control that many of us are all used to, but the perspective is far from the eyes of your character. Employing a third person view that provides the same sort of character recognition of *Tomb Raider*, there is a stunningly cinematic sense to the gameplay.

The original game's protagonist, Corvus, is back. But this time, he's extremely agile, wonderfully animated and loaded to the gills with captivating weaponry and spells. When in a tough situation, he can vault himself onto a nearby ledge and decimate his foes from a safe distance, or even jump at a wall, execute a back-flip over his attackers, land at their backs and slash them from behind. The potential for fun is immense.

The game's producer, Steve Stringer (who also produced *Hexen II*), certainly understands that paying close attention to the finer details can make a good gaming experience an absolutely great one. Through his past experience, he has learned that gamers want to be immersed. He knows that games are now becoming more than just an escape from reality, but rather a form of entertainment that can titillate the senses on a plane that is potentially higher than any other entertainment form. *Heretic II* is one of the many upcoming 3D action games that will attempt to reach such great heights, but in a style that is without equal. ☺



By Dave Rees

heretic 2

Corvus is back for more

Third person gaming reaches new heights!



Experience Another Reality





I.a.p.d. 2100

By Mike Hobbs

Electronic Arts puts a Strike-like spin on future law enforcement.

Originally planned to be something like a "Future Strike" entry in Electronic Arts' venerable *Strike* series, LAPD 2100 quickly took on a life of its own in the development process and went on to become a completely separate project. Taking the environment friendly viewpoint of the previous *Strike* games and casting it into the future must've seemed a natural,

and, indeed, it has borne what looks to be an immensely playable title.

Playing as a member of LA's future finest, it's on your shoulders to protect the southland from a new breed of high tech criminals. Set in the year 2100, things have evolved hugely beyond today's Caprices and Crown Victorias; and your selection of rides



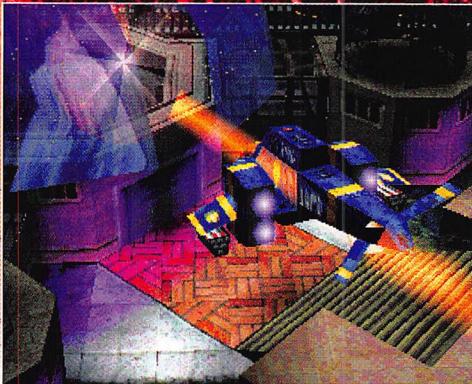
With its innovative two player head-to-head mode, LAPD 2100 adds an element missing from the Strike series.

reflects that: Think more along the lines of an ED-209 and an armed to the teeth Blade Runner Spinner, both wrapped up in one transforming police craft of the future. You can change between the two at any time, and this looks to figure heavily into the game's overall strategy and entertainment. At this point, it is uncertain as to what other craft may join your roster.

Our three level preview version hinted at the kind of mission based structure to look forward to in the final release. At this stage, it leans heavily towards purely destructive missions, but I anticipate seeing more variety as the game develops. What surprised me was the two player head-to-head split-screen mode. Here, you must defend your base by acquiring neutral gun towers and

building a contingency of hovertanks and futuristic attack choppers. Working within the technical limitations of a split screen, it was very playable and should prove to be a high point of the finished product. Also on board was a two player co-op mode, where in the single player missions could be tackled with a friend. This was nice to see, as it added a multiplayer element missing from the *Strike* series.

EA is certainly on track to producing one of their stronger console offerings with *LAPD 2100*. Even in its early state, the game's combination of solid graphics and good single and two player action bode well for its development. An October release is scheduled, and, while already looking good, the game can only get better. ><

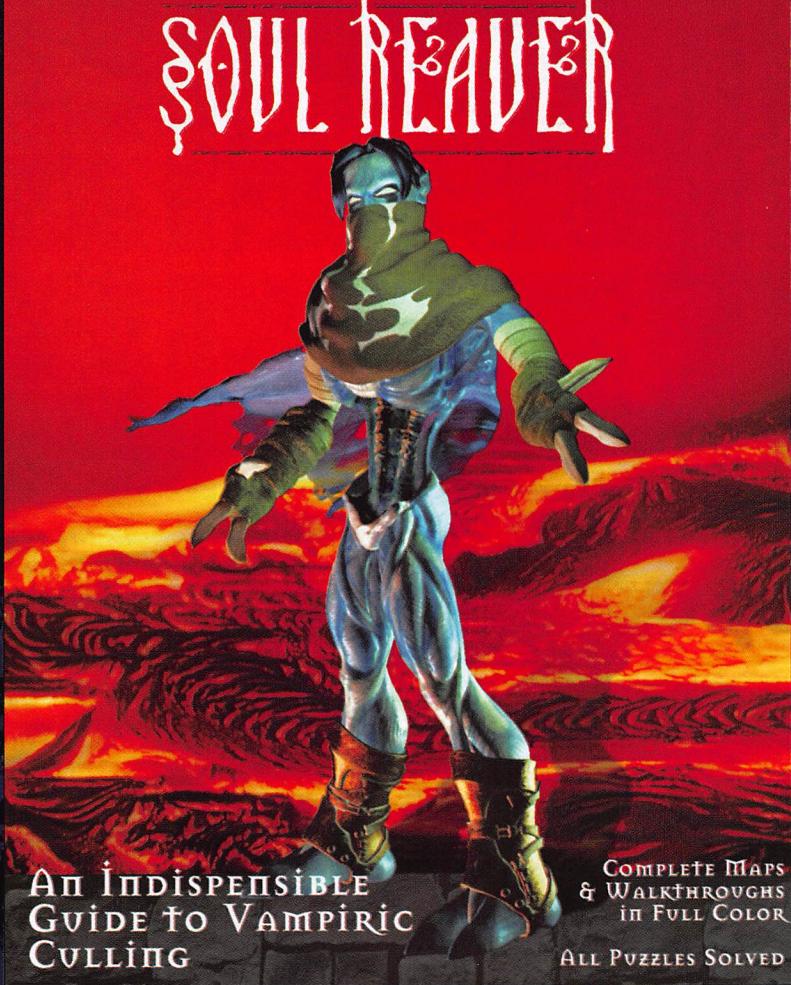


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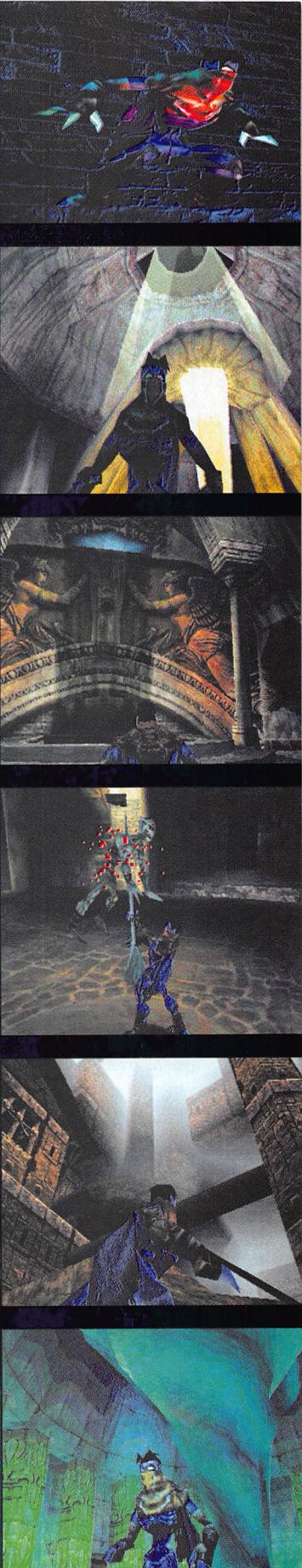
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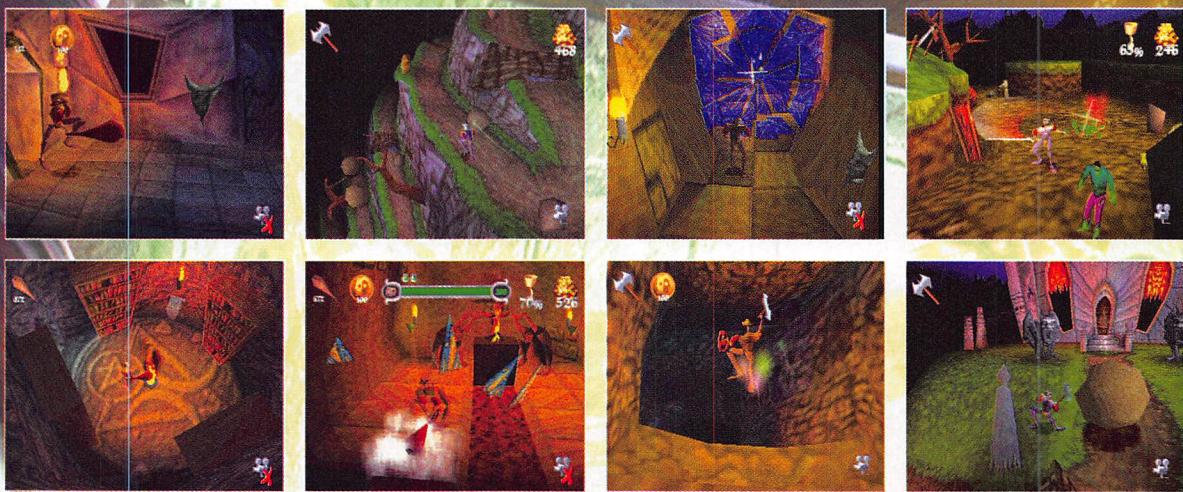
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medievil

by Dave Halverson



The evil sorcerer Zarok has harnessed enough ancient magical power to cast the world into eternal darkness.

Join Sir Daniel Fortesque in a gothic tale, where in death he attempts to do what he could not in life.

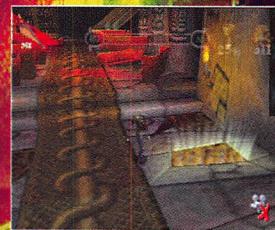
Vivid daydreams of Sony's *Medievil* have haunted me since E3 '97, where the game was shown for the first time in the U.S. Capcom certainly have left a huge void to be filled with the contemptible absence of the legendary *Ghouls & Ghosts* on any new platform. Riches await the developer who can conjure a necropolis with a similar vibe. At first glance, *Medievil* looked like it would be the game to fill the bill...

Over a year later, the day for me to lay hands on a Dual-Shock for my first evaluation finally arrived. Sir Daniel Fortesque is a willing bag of bones, user-friendly and an instant joy to control - so have at it I did.

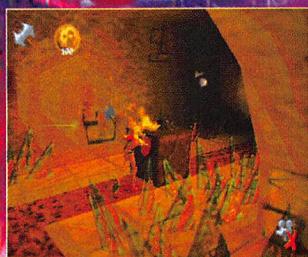
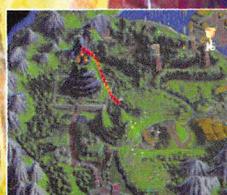
Contrary to my grand vision, *Ghouls & Ghosts* probably never crossed the developers' (Sony Europe's Cambridge Studios) minds, as *Medievil* sets its sights more on free-roaming adventure than hard-core platforming. Besides the motif and the fact that caskets unearth and

spill out flesh eating zombies, there are few similarities to *G&G*. The spectral 3D platform post remains vacant; however, free roaming adventure gaming is about to get a shot of adrenaline.

Medievil oozes bewitching exploratory elements, creative level structure and celestial ambience. The game is designed in such a way that you can quickly overcome certain obstacles within an area, or search for every ounce of its content. You can scurry up the spiraling Cemetery Hill, and leap over boulders sent down by the Necromance, duck into crevices or search the lower



Sir Fortesque goes bump in the night with the best of them... not bad for a dead guy



The map screen allows Sir Dan to revisit previously explored regions to collect necessary items, open new areas, or just slice and dice more zombies!



region... Here, you'll unearth a hidden club, break into the sealed witch's cavern, ignite the apex of the club after finding a hidden chamber, and use it to light the torch that opens the dungeon cells – thus revealing a king's ransom. The richly textured environments play host to multiple planes of action. Often times the heart of a given level needs to be unearthed, lending a cryptic feel to the action. Within the levels you can purchase a limited variety of items with the gold you find, but to receive the true weapons of power, one must seize the sacred chalice hidden in such places as I've described. The chalice grants entrance into the Hall of Heroes, a medievil banquet room filled with weapons from the gods. These weapons will prove vital in the rooms and regions ahead. Your first true challenge lies in the mausoleum, where you will awaken a heart of glass and fight your first spirit. It's as climactic a first boss as I've seen in quite some time - a telltale sign that you're in the midst of a memorable gaming experience. Tying it all together, *Medievil's* soundtrack conforms to the on-screen demeanor in a similar vein to the legendary *Castlevania SotN*. That's quite a statement, I know, but trust me – a lot of thought went into *Medievil's* musical accompaniment.

I've painted a pretty picture in this preview, for sure. As the game enters the final stages of development, I'm confident the end result will be nothing short of an epic ethereal romp. Join me when I take a further look into the depths of *Medievil* in the near future. ♦



The original *Moto Racer* attracted a good many fans on PS and especially PC with its melding of eye pleasing graphics and quick, intuitive gameplay with both motocross and super-bike styles of racing. It's no surprise, then, that we are looking at a sequel. Jointly developed by EA and Delphine, *MR2* will feature markedly upgraded graphics and physics along with the greatest track editor ever implemented. Both versions feature this user friendly tool, which allows you to design courses by simply pushing and pulling points along a three dimensional representation of the track. Adding hills and undulations is similarly accomplished and you can test out your creation at any time during its design. It can take you literally seconds to design a course setting a new standard in track editing ease. Weather and time of day are modifiable as well, with control over rain, snow and fog. The PS will allegedly be able to store up to 56 tracks on one of its little plastic memory cards, with the PC version basically unlimited, of course.

Graphically, both versions are impressive for their respective hardware. Running on a Voodoo 1 or 2, the PC version looks gorgeous, its accelerated sheen in evidence with its a high frame rate, resolution and specular highlights. Early but still convincing, the lighting effects should render the finished version among the top looking PC racers. Of course, things don't look quite as good on the PS (there's still some work to be done concerning frame rate and pop-up) but I trust a solid 30 fps will be attained as the game nears completion.

As expected, the PC will be able to support play over IPX and TCP/IP, but it also allows up to four to play on one cramped computer monitor. PS makes due with a horizontal or vertical split, with currently only a slight hit taken in frame rate and resolution. New gameplay features include aerial antics (such as no-handlers) and improved cornering on dirt, but the riders lack proper animation in the motocross venue. As both versions enter the final development phase, we've been assured that EA will settle for nothing less than a spectacular sequel. ➤

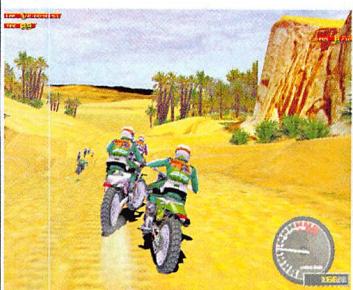


playstation version

moto racer 2

Electronic Arts and Delphine attempt the ultimate sequel with a track editor so revolutionary that it may change racing as we know it...

By Mike Hobbs



pc version



O.D.T., hailing from the busy game publishing company Psygnosis, is about to join the dozens of 3D adventure games in the PS library. And although French developers FDI have woven a compelling tale through excellent CG and narration, the gameplay itself needs major overhauls before it can round out the package. We've been told to expect "significant graphic/gameplay revisions and improvements," so I'll hold my critical breath until the review's ready to go.

O.D.T. chronicles the story of a scientific balloon crew and their travels through a futuristic, parallel world. While returning from a voyage with a newfound green artifact, a sudden, violent electrical storm assaults the vessel. The crew fights valiantly to

o.d.t.

by Mike Griffin

Return to reality... Or Die Trying

keep the ship in the air as giant gales pound into its fragile structure, but the deadly winds and metaphysical lightning strikes are unrelenting. Suddenly there's a massive explosion, transforming the sky into a funnel-shaped warp, and the balloon is sucked through. The vessel plummets towards a strange castle, the helmsman is tossed from the wheel, and all goes dark.

Assuming the role of Corporal Djeebee, the tough-talking leader, Mee Kal, Chief Engineer, the Archbishop, or young kung-fu fighting stowaway Sophia, you must penetrate the depths of the alternate world. Characters can fight hand to hand, with lasers or flame throwers, and over a half a dozen types of magic are available.

Plagued by several glitching walls and camera angles, the levels are not polished at this point, but it's clear that



work is being done to remedy this, as some levels feel much closer to completion than others. Intelligent secrets are already in, such as manipulating cranes to reveal passages, and there's a healthy variety of platforming and blasting. The play-mechanics, unfortunately, are stiff and unappealing. It's a "screen-turner," but sadly the screen (and character) turning doesn't respond fast enough. This hurts the most when fighting quick, mobile bosses. Also, the jumping is haphazard; it almost feels like *Out of this World* or *Flashback*, in that it's very deliberate. Fine for the aforementioned games, but not in a pseudo-action game like *O.D.T.* Instant response is a requirement.

Before I make too many enemies at Psygnosis, I'd like to make it clear that this is only a preview. Much of *O.D.T.* could change before it finalizes. It desperately needs intuitive, twitch controls, but already the strong theme and amazing ambiance are indicative of a committed, creative staff. Maybe they can pull it off.



These Pennies can turn on a dime!



Up until a few months ago, the *Choro-Q* series was imbedded in quality. All three incarnations on the PlayStation have been quality super-deformed racers. Then, suddenly, Takara got the idea that everything should be *Choro-Q*, and came out with three dismal follow ups: *Choro-Q Jet* and *Choro-Q Boat* for the PlayStation, and *Choro-Q Park* for the Saturn. While *Boat* doesn't completely suck, the other two heartedly do, and that had me quite worried about the Nintendo 64 version, as I had high hopes that it would mimic or surpass the lack of standard set by the first three. After a quick spin around the preview cart, which arrived just in time for a brief evaluation before press time, my jubilation is actually three fold. Not only is *Choro-Q 64* (as it's called in Japan) on par with the best of the series, but it's based more on the actual Penny Racer toy cars (from which the series was originally derived) and has already been translated for a US release by THQ! The *Penny Racers* aspect of the game design allows for a new set of play mechanics to be implemented, which likens the series more to that of *Mario Kart* than the straight racing style of the originals. Not only do we get smooth, nicely detailed courses littered with effects like transparencies, fluidly animated water, and vibrant lighting and explosions, but a host of weapons and tricks as well. By winning, you actually get to rob items from other cars in the Settings menu. Choosing between engine, tires, steering, brakes, decorative parts, armor, and weapons, you can build one of 13 body styles into a mean little machine. There are nine courses in all, all types of weather conditions and up to 100 upgrades available. Also debuting in *Penny Racers* is an all new barrel roll that rocks with skill. Approaching a sharp turn you can pitch your P-racer sideways, roll and dart forth for a super sharp cornering blast. Often times this lines you up with a booster pad for maximum results. Tune in next month for a complete review after I've completely dissected this great new N64 racer.

penny racers

By Dave Halverson



UP TO FOUR PLAYERS CAN HAVE IT OUT ON TRACKS OF YOUR OWN DESIGN WITH P-RACER'S BUILT IN TRACK EDITOR! I'M THE ONE IN THE TOP LEFT BY THE WAY.



Presumably having started life as a Super Famicom title (and being the follow-up to Namco's first 16-bit RPG, *Tales of Phantasia*), *Tales of Destiny*, with its nostalgic gameplay and hand drawn art, transports us back in time to a classic 16-bit RPG era. The story revolves around our protagonist, Stahn Aileron, who stows away on a giant sky-dragon ship in order to get back to his home village. The ship comes under attack from beasts and monsters, and Stahn is forced to run. After stumbling around in the bowels of the ship, he uncovers a weapon called



Undertake an enchanted tale with Stahn in Namco's title that is destined for greatness!



tales of destiny

by Bryn Williams

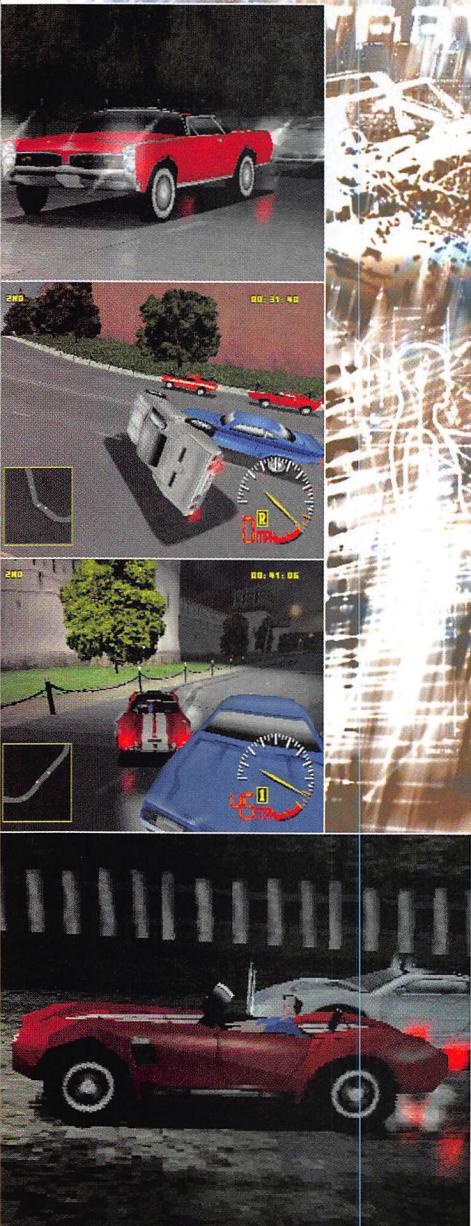
Dymlos - one of the Swordian (there are six of them in total), an ancient race of magically enchanted swords. Together they form a partnership and set off on a quest to defeat the evil powers of the land, meeting others on the way. The preview version I looked at had around one hour of playtime, so I was able to gauge the game enough to know that it was a promising effort. The look and feel is very familiar, with visually appealing characters, environments and mechanics. The combat system is quite unusual, allowing the player to fight in a 2D, real-time fashion.

Along with CPU character assistant, spells and special techniques can be used to defeat enemies. As for the story-line, Stahn and his fellow lens hunters (lens is a valuable mineral that can be traded for money) get caught up in all sorts of adventure based capers, making for a highly enjoyable romp. Fans of the 16-bit RPG-style games (*Mana*, *Final Fantasy*, *Star Ocean*, etc.) will no doubt lap it up.



On a personal note, I would like to thank Namco for bringing this smart title to the PlayStation. It is really exciting for me, as a veteran RPG player, to be able to sit down and appreciate the work that is going into *TOD*. More RPGs need the old SNES feel...



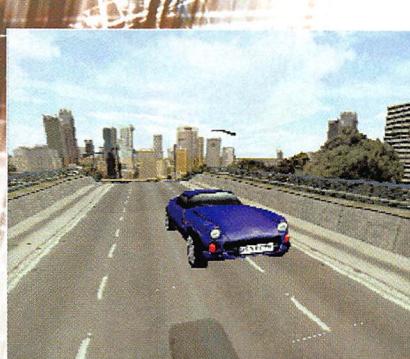


test drive 5

By Mike Griffin

Last year, Pitbull Syndicate provided Accolade with a fast, detailed streaming engine in *Test Drive 4*. The frame rate was high, the resolution was crisp, and plenty of muscle cars were available. The track design, however, was a little uninspiring, and options were scarce. In the face of *Gran Turismo* or even *Need for Speed 3*, *Test Drive 4* didn't really stand a chance. With *Test Drive 5*, Accolade should compensate for last year's mediocre performance: They've promised a fine package of options, twice as many playable cars, and three times the amount of tracks, each with a number of branching routes and time saving shortcuts. These enhanced features won't ensure the game's success, but they are indicative of Accolade's continuing commitment to improvement. Our preview version was early, but it was clearly playable enough for a little gameplay information.

Only five tracks are open right now - Moscow, Blue Ridge Parkway, Sydney, Hawaii, and the U.K. Circuit - and all have been rendered in 640x480 high-res. Moscow has you driving through the outskirts of the famed Soviet city along twisting, narrow roads, where a plethora of small track splits keep you on your toes as you gain the advantage using clever decision-making. Blue Ridge offers long, multi-lane stretches



***Test Drive 5 uses a powerful proprietary streaming engine...
The track builds itself as you race!***

across a picturesque suburban landscape. Down under, Sydney is a giant urban course with massive straight aways and treacherous hilly turns inside the city. A huge split provides two completely unique ways to travel the course, and they each seem to be fair and balanced, with no particular advantage over the other; I'll decide any differences once the final CPU car AI is tweaked. Hawaii is undeniably the most playable track implemented thus far, and with its lengthy sea-side vistas and awesome ramp-like hills, huge splits, and high speed valleys, this will be a favorite for intense split-screen two-player races. Finally, the U.K. Circuit is quite early, but it should be a decent romp through green hills and smothering floral overhangs.

Details on the 23 cars of *Test Drive 5* will come in the next preview. Sweet modern rides like the Viper and XJ20 are included, complimented by classics such as the '70 Chevelle and '68 Mustang, all in four unique paint jobs. We'll have more coverage in future issues, as Accolade's racing hope approaches release.

1988 GM JN1, V10.
Aluminum block with cast
188-inch bore and 87
horsepower at 5200 rpm
14 ft torque at 3700 rpm
6000 rpm redline
10.4 compression ratio



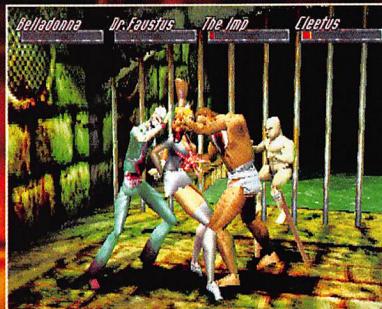
thrill kill

by Mike Griffin

Morbid and twisted death sequences...

In my fifteen or so years of gaming, I've probably had the most rewarding experiences when playing multi-player games. Whether crushing an opponent in VF, frying my eyes after hours of *Bare Knuckle* or *Guardian Heroes*, or relishing in the joys of *Bomberman*, there's always been a rush attributed to playing alongside other humans. The instant gratification is unmatched. *Thrill Kill* is the latest multi-tap game to join the phenomenon, and it enters the fray with the most twisted of intentions. Developed by Paradox for Virgin Interactive, this multi-player fighting game is a brutally violent four-player festival. It's perfect for mindless fun with friends and cold drinks. Mindless, but not brainless. There should be enough depth to the gameplay to satisfy hard-core 3D fighting fans once Paradox has completed its final few months of dedicated beta tweaking. For an update, straight from the developers, see the Status Report at the bottom of the page. For my little bit of preview analysis, based on a very playable post-E3 version of the game, read on...

Thrill Kill is a malicious fight to the death, sponsored by hell itself. Eight sinful participants repent through vicious, limb-flailing combat, trapped between four cramped walls. The detailed fighting chambers each depict a morbid, hell-based theme, whether it be the bloody padded walls of The Insane Asylum, Satan's own Sewer of Styx,



or the urinal lined walls of The Lavatory. The small chambers don't feel so claustrophobic when you're bashing opponents into the walls. The Tormentor accomplishes this pummeling with his trusty heated chain, Dr. Faustus offers experimental scalpel surgery, Belladonna electrifies with her nasty dominatrix prod, and Cleetus brandishes a bloody leg stump. The lumbering giant, Mammoth, applies basic fist to body techniques and slams foes around like rag dolls, while Violet contorts her freakish body to smack opponents from all angles. And finally, The Imp uses his stilts to poke fun in the competition, and Oddball, armless, relies on powerful head-butting and leg combos to juggle and devastate. A typical fight involves three to four of these characters, and with each successful pummeling, their Thrill Kill meters rise. When a combatant peaks his/her meter, a Thrill Kill attack can be employed against foes. You'll witness decapitation, bodies splashing into a pulp, and blood pumping out your opponent's mouth in dramatic camera sweeping splendor. You fight this way until it's down to two fighters, at which point a full meter yields the final, all-consuming (especially in Cletus' case) death animation finale. You've never, ever seen "fatalities" so brutal.

We've been assured by Paradox that this current preview copy has much tweaking to endure before meeting Virgin's tough beta standards. Despite how playable this version may be, I agree. There are a few bugs right now that prevent *Thrill Kill* from being completely effective. Let's hope they can sort it out. With a concept and theme this strong, the game needs to be awesome! ☺

■ STATUS REPORT

from Kevin Mulhall of Paradox Development: "We will continue debugging and fine tuning '*Thrill Kill*' until the end of July. There is still a month left to improve the pre-reviewed version, and we are looking to pack as much strategy and exciting aspects into the game as we possibly can. Our play testers are having a blast with '*Thrill Kill*', and, quite frankly, so is the entire team."





A Shiny new franchise is born.. Come get some 9's

It's the 21st century and Wex Major, an adventurous teenager lost in the middle of a foreign galaxy, is caught up in a galactic turmoil. By fate's hand, Wex befriends eight alien teenagers, all of whom have been orphaned by the ultimate villain, Karn, upon whom The Wild 9 swear vengeance. You're out to kick his almighty ass and have fun doing it.



Shiny Entertainment's *The Wild 9*... plagued by delays, or perhaps privy to an elongated development cycle in the interest of the perfection that it takes to make a timeless game? After actually playing *TW9* for the first time, I'd have to say the latter is a more likely scenario. With their first thoroughbred PlayStation platformer, Shiny bestow upon the zealous gamer something completely new and unique. You'll do things you've never done before in ways you've never dreamed you would. My initial exposure to the game was only five levels (none of which were 100% buttoned up), yet I still sensed the excellence of the design and implementation behind the Rig, and the overall gist of the big picture.



Dual Analog pad compatibility allows for fluid bashing to and fro as you mash your opponents skull into the steel girders.

Though polygonal, somehow Shiny have squeaked out the precision control they made famous with *Earth Worm Jim*. Perfect collision and instant response make the game feel like it's sprite based 2D; looking at a beautifully rendered polygonal world while slapping forth old school gameplay feels friggin' awesome. Attribute this to a coalition of Wex' unique movement and the functionality of his omnipotent weapon, the Rig.

Animated within themselves, the environments look alive, and are pulsing with almost illegal doses of playability. With so many ways to play, so many ways to kill and mame, one is hard pressed to decide: do I leave this one dragging his limp carcass in agony, throw him over the edge, or just roast him all together? We'll roll out the whole 9 yards in glorious detail in the October GR.



3DO Previews

heroes III



For *Heroes of Might and Magic* fans, this latest offering from 3DO and New World Computing will be a godsend. Taking the look and feel from the original games, NWC just upgraded everything possible. Now the graphics are all pre-rendered (yet they still keep the charisma of the previous installments), there's more detailed character development, and more Hero types, monsters, town types, spells, unique locations and artifacts have been added for you to experience.



requiem



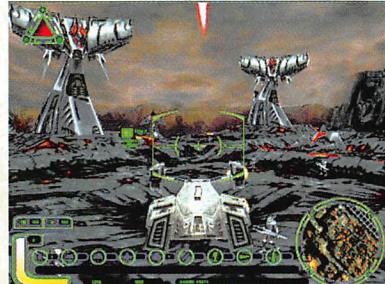
While the religious conservatives might find most first-person shooters a bit sacrilegious in the first place, they're going to have a fun time with *Requiem*. Loosely based on *Paradise Lost*, *Requiem* has you taking the role of Malachi, a chosen angel, sent down to do away with the Fallen, a bunch of your buddies who have fallen from grace. Taking place in a depressing futuristic Earth, you'll have to rely on heavy duty weaponry and angelic powers to battle against demons and those who have fallen under their influence. *Requiem* also follows the cool trend of implementing tons of storyline and scripted events into this genre; you'll make friends, gather information from colorful characters, and watch loved ones die. Interesting stuff...



uprising 2



Fan mail. Sure, most companies read it, but how many of them actually base an entire project around it? *Uprising 2* is a game for the fans, because in essence, they created it. Cyclone Studios actually developed the sequel for their surprise hit with the help of stacks of letters, all giving complements, criticisms, and ideas. So, aside from the greatly improved graphics (which are based around 3D cards this time) and intensified gameplay, we have something the original was sorely missing - a complex storyline. Other things to look forward to are weather effects and night missions, an easy to use map editor, and highly polished network play.



uprising X



Along with *Army Men 3D*, 3DO are forging into new territory with their PC-to-console conversions, actually creating new games instead of cheaply porting the same code. While this practice in itself is commendable, the fact that these are actually high-quality games themselves is even more impressive. *Uprising X* features tons of simplified action, high quality textures, and almost no slowdown. Even in the 2-player mode, the early version we played didn't even stutter. Engine-wise, this is one of the most advanced games on the PlayStation. Hopefully the gameplay will follow suit.



S.C.A.R.S.

DEVELOPER: VIVID IMAGE PUBLISHER: UBISOFT AVAILABLE: FALL

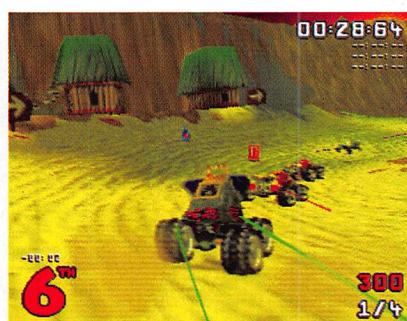
From the busiest developer on the globe, Ubisoft, the possible hits are leaking into every genre on multiple platforms. *Mario Kart* meets *Moon Patrol* in their latest 3D racer, *S.C.A.R.S.*, shown here for the Nintendo 64 (PlayStation and PC versions are in the pipeline as well - and that accelerated version...oh my). Although our early cart featured only five of nine tracks and no music, the game already shows extreme promise.

Just think *Mario Kart* with twisted cars (metallic manifestations of shark, rhino, snake, lobster, and praying mantis to name a few), longer, twistier, hillier and all-around cooler courses, and a warped sense of humor. Elements such as realistic weather, crisp explosions, and some of the best lighting yet seen on the console drive the visuals, while the buoyant physics, multiple short cuts, and unique



weaponry dial in the game play. Like *M-Kart*, there are four cups: Carbon, Crystal, Diamond, and Custom, and 4 players can partake in the fun. My feeling is that developers Vivid Image are on the right track in terms of just about every aspect of the game. At this point, my only concern is with the cars' connectivity to the terrain, where it's currently a tad detached and floaty. This aspect of any racing game, however, is easily tweaked and usually done upon the designers'

final check. My instincts tell me that *S.C.A.R.S.* will likely leave *Mario Kart* in the dust and finally fill the current void left by its less than stunning showing when compared to the SNES original. If it does, a well deserved "ka-ching!" will ring loudly for a company that certainly deserves it. ☀



DEAD IN THE WATER

DEVELOPER: PLAYER 1 PUBLISHER: ASC AVAILABLE: NOVEMBER

From the makers of *Robotron X* comes *Dead in the Water*, an ambitious 3D vehicular shooter. It's been referred to as *Vigilante 8* on the water, or *Twisted Metal* in a boat—descriptions that may not be too far off the mark. Just like the aforementioned titles, *Dead in the Water* offers multiple battle crafts, each with a crew and personality all their own, and tracks designed for both racing and combat. Weapons like homing missiles and floating mines are littered throughout the watery tracks, and each weapon yields an impressive explosion or effect on the water. Speaking of water, the developers have designed an interesting set of polygonal water physics that react realistically to the speed of turns, the velocity of landings, and the amount of boats occupying any one location. This, combined with shortcut jumps and secret passageways, helps to create some memorable moments on tracks like Hong Kong and the Bayou. It's still not clear whether *Dead in the Water* can generate the same level of excitement that *Twisted Metal 2* and *Vigilante 8* caused, but Player 1 and ASC certainly have a good concept here. ☀



DEVIL DICE

DEVELOPER: Shift PUBLISHER: THQ AVAILABLE: FALL

Perhaps inspired by the success of *Intelligent Cube* (or not), here comes another high res, 60 fps tumbling block puzzler. The blocks in this case are six sided dice that your little devil character runs on and tumbles into matching patterns on the playfield. By aligning, say, five dice, all with five showing on their top face, they drop into the floor. Up to four players can compete in a variety of modes, including war and battle. There's also a one player puzzle game in which you must eliminate dice using only a certain number of "tumbles." Developed by Shift, *Devil Dice* has been very popular on the Japanese charts (where it is known as *Sai*), and THQ is hoping for a similar success stateside. It's no secret though that *Intelligent Qube* wasn't nearly the sensation over here that it was in its birthplace. Still, *DD* could find an audience, and our time with a preview copy was entertaining. Currently slated for an October release, we'll have the final word in an upcoming issue. Let's just hope that the idea of little demons tumbling dice doesn't seem sinful to folks. ☀



DUKE NUKEM: Time to Kill

No matter how you look at it, sentient mutant pig cops in cowboy outfits and togas demand respect. And unloading a couple rounds from a ridiculously oversized double-barreled shotgun into their plump heads demands even more respect. If the final animations of these poor slobs leads to a more convincing depiction of popping flesh, the delight from such a twisted act will drop *Duke Nukem: Time to Kill* into the hallowed hall of fame of outrageous and abnormal gaming.

Branding *Duke Nukem's* journey through various periods of time littered with pigs and aliens twisted may be a bit harsh, because as we all are well aware, mindless and gory blasting is based in gaming normality. What is twisted and basically a question to the rational thought processes of the design team is the ability to shoot down gyrating strippers and hanging dead bodies—a gracious display of tasteless humor.

Irreverent and subversive, Duke observes his exploits with taunts and one-liners that sometimes amuse, at other times are cause for incredulous laughter, but always indicate the reprehensible nature of the game. But give *DN* more grit and off-kilter imagery than a romp with a White House intern and forget to make it playable—the currently sloppy framerate and control are hijacking a playable game—then it's time to look towards Duke's next appearance. *

**INTERNATIONAL RALLY**

Anytime we receive a racing game of any sort that supports 3Dx, there is good reason to get excited; the hardware acceleration alone usually assures a graphically pleasing experience. But it appears that today's expectations may be too high for THQ's upcoming PC racing title *International Rally Championship*. There is no denying that the graphics here are clear and, for the most part, smooth, but there is such a lack of detail in the textures, car models and track design that one can't help but wonder how this PC game will keep players interested in the end. But for PC owners that also own a PlayStation, there may be hope.

IRC on PS is a completely different game. Although early, it has an excellent frame rate, crisp graphics, and an overall feel that beats its PC counterpart hands down. And with powerful exclusive features such as a tile-based track editor and a "Challenge Tommi" mode that pits up against Tommi Makinen (the game is called *Tommi Makinen Rally* in Europe), it is obvious that the PSX team has a better idea of what makes a racing game worth the money. Although it probably won't come close to matching the splendor of *Gran Turismo*, *IRC* is bound to be a decent racing game when it hits the shelves this fall. *

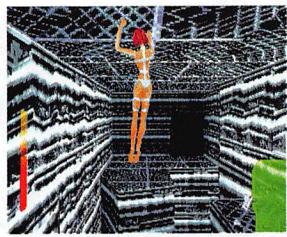
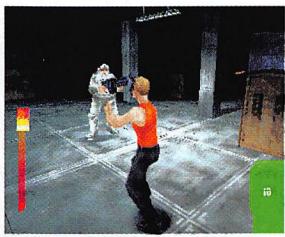
**FIFTH ELEMENT**

Written by the director Luc Besson when he was only a teenager, the goofy, sprightly story of the *Fifth Element* reflects the juvenile qualities any young boy would possess. But what it lacks in words it makes up for in compelling images, demanding that you put criticism on hold just to look at the sights.

Based on this movie, *The Fifth Element* video game, at least in its early state, needs to be treated with the same mindset: Unlike the movie, the game may be a turnoff to look at, but what it offers in gameplay deserves attention.

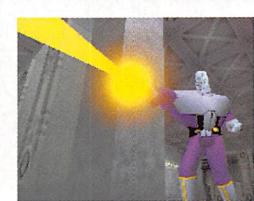
Funny how the *Nightmare Creatures* engine, which ostensibly powers *The Fifth Element*, would be so problematic. *Nightmare Creatures* was beautiful, but *The Fifth Element* seems to draw very little from it. (Well, it does have annoying black fog in your face, from which enemies annoyingly attack.) But what it does borrow heavily from is great hand-to-hand combat, which is handled in a multitude of combos of kicks and punches. Spanning 26 levels through four distinct locations, the alien entity Leeloo and her guardian Korben search for keys, weapons, power-ups, and anything else that can aid their complex action/adventure through a futuristic earth. *

DEVELOPER: KAUSTO
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION

**SUPERMAN**

Titus has scored a major coup by licensing the ultra-popular WB *Superman* series for use in an N64 action title. *Superman* the game will offer loads of free-roaming 3D action in and around popular locales based on the animated series. A sprawling, main Metropolis map can be flown through in order to access different buildings, where a dozen or so missions take place. After entering these buildings, expansive 3D levels are yours to conquer. Although plenty of robotic sentries populate each level, there will be a puzzle element to contend with as well. In a strange twist, Superman is unable to access different parts of a level until he shuts off the power to various Krypton generators.

I guess Krypton is easy to come by these days. Favorite villains from the series like Parasite and Lex Luther (as well as his powerful robot creation, the Lexor 5000) will make appearances at various points, and Superman's sweetie Lois Lane checks in periodically with information. Titus will be supplying us with an infinitely more playable *Superman* very soon, so check future GRs for continuing coverage. *

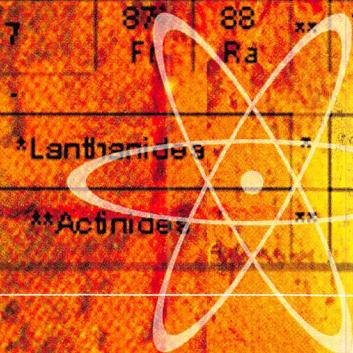


Half-Life

by Dave Rees

*A secret experiment gone horribly wrong...
a government coverup adds to the nightmare...*

	Group 1	2
1	H	
2	Li	Be
3	Na	Mg
4	K	Ca
5	Rb	Sr
6	Cs	Ba
7	Fr	Ra
*Lanthanides		
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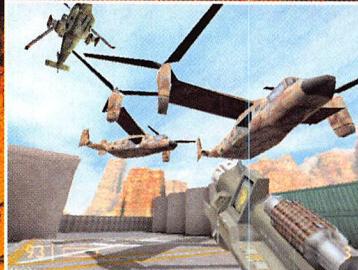
HALF-LIFE

Mr. Friendly

Attack by using friendly to knock power off feet. Watch friendly move in place with above key.

Valve's upcoming first-person shooter

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There's much more than laboratory mutations to mop up in this adventure. Look for confrontations with stealth helicopters, military squads, and an assortment of robotic weaponry.

5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
B	C	N	O	F									
13	14	15	16	17	18								
Al	Si	P	S	Cl	Ar								
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36		
Fe	Co	Ni	Cu	Zn	Ga	Ge	As	Se	Br	Kr			
44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54			
Ru	Rh	Pd	Ag	Cd	In	Sn	Sb	Te	I	Xe			
77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86				
Ir	Pt	Au	Hg	Tl	Pb	Bi	Po	At	Rn				
109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118				
Mt	Uun	Uuu	Uub	Uut	Uuq	Uup	Uuh	Uus	Uuo				
63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70						
Eu	Gd	Tb	Dy	Ho	Er	Tm	Yb						
95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102						
Np	Cm	Bk	Cf	Es	Fm	Md	No						

There is nowhere to run. There is nowhere to hide. Don't even think about pausing for a moment to gather your thoughts. In this world, your enemies are looking and listening. They are scanning for any signs of life. If they find you, they will hunt you down. They aim to kill. They work in numbers. They flush you out, flank you, deceive you, and taunt you with harsh words. They verbally communicate to each other while attacking. They are quick, coordinated, highly intelligent and fiercely motivated. They know when you are hurt. They have emotions. They are trained killers and are very hard to avoid. And you are their number one target. Welcome to Half-Life..





Many of Valve's key players have atypical backgrounds for video game developers. But don't let that fool you. *Half-Life* is going to be awesome.

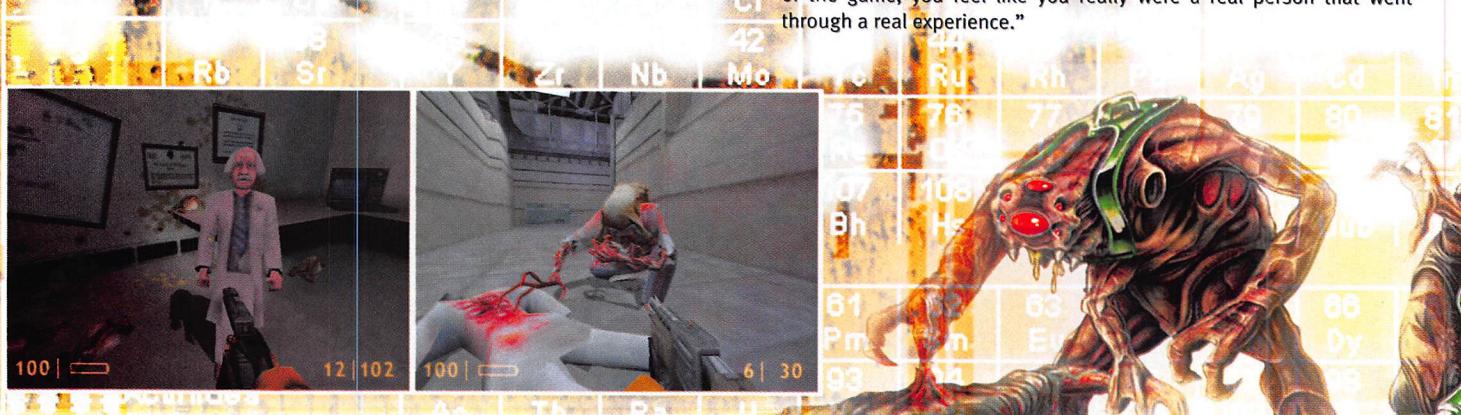


Valve's first game ever, *Half-Life*, has been in development for two years now. Can a developer make a huge impact with their first title? The company's founder, Gabe Newell, certainly thinks so - and we have the proof. For the past several weeks we have had exclusive rights to a fresh build of the game, and the experience has been intense to say the least. The game's theme is a thick blend of science fiction, horror, and action, and the manner in which it unfolds is so convincing that playing it can become a personal, emotional experience. Although it is still at an early stage, it is obvious that *Half-Life* will teach its competition a lesson or two. And there are a lot of reasons why.



[wrong place, wrong time]

Before a single line of code was written, the inspiration for *Half-Life* was *The Mist*, a novella by Stephen King. In fact, one of the more horrific and outright impressive creatures in the game, The Tentacle, was drawn directly from the classic King story. But since then, the plot line has gone through a countless number of changes and still continues to be altered to this day. The story now includes heavy doses of science fiction and action, and it is likely that this combination will push the sensation of fear well beyond anything before, including the ubiquitous *Resident Evil* series.



A completely unique and terrifying experience awaits every player...

To properly depict their tale, Valve had to figure out how to use the *Quake 2* engine in a new, creative way, to expand it and make it more capable and efficient. It would seem that their efforts are paying off, as one of the game's most impressive achievements is how the gameplay is so wide-open, yet the plot line remains smooth flowing. Marc Laidlaw, a writer and level designer for *Half-Life*, elaborates the plot: "The game opens with a big disaster and you're set up for it. You're brought in on this train, you ride it to work, it is an ordinary day at the labs and the scientists and everybody are talking to you. If you try to go through the airlock and you don't have your hazard suit on, then they won't let you. It also forces you to see all the parts of the map and interact with all the characters and learn to use the controls without being in combat right away. You could run and get your suit, go to the elevator, go down to the test lab, and blow by all of the scientists in a couple of minutes. If you interact with characters and take your time, it can take ten minutes before the disaster happens. You're brought into the lab and get an idea of what you're doing, and you've got a big analyzer, and you need to put this sample into place and that's when the disaster happens. At that point the game really kicks in."

Half-Life's story transpires through its highly interactive environments. Arriving at areas just as events begin to transpire is an important part of keeping the story's chapters congruent, but given the game's highly flexible AI, there is a lot of unpredictability that comes into play, and thus it is very hard to get these occurrences to repeat. "Every time you play, you could take a security guard and bring him into a room with you and get into a firefight with a soldier," says Marc. "The soldier might run away one time, another time he'll shoot the guard who is with you, another time you'll kill him: Every time is different." This type of play adds elements of surprise and repeatability. Different people will play the game and have completely unique experiences - a direction in which many FPS games are heading.

Half-Life's protagonist, Gordon Freeman, is not nearly as identifiable or stereotypical as someone like Duke Nukem. He's just a smart, almost innocent guy who is plunged into a heap of trouble, and as the story evolves, it becomes more personal. That was Valve's plan. They wanted to create a sense of something more like a traditional movie - a story in which the character is tangible and real. Echoing this notion, Marc states: "You assume the role of an important character and by the end of the game, you feel like you really were a real person that went through a real experience."





real life

13
AI

Although the textures in *Half-Life* are 8-bit (256 colors), each texture has its own color palette, which greatly improves the overall fervor of the game's visuals. In *Quake 2*, for example, there is only one 8-bit palette for each map, which is why the levels often suffer from the infamous brown or gray tones. It is *Quake 2*'s colored lighting that often fills the gaps, and makes up for these palette limitations, but *Half-Life*'s enhanced palette handling provides for a much richer visual impact. And when combining the game's texture processing with an advanced color lighting scheme, the overall effect becomes extremely impressive. But because this technology also demands more RAM, there must be a trade-off somewhere. That is where *Half-Life*'s skeletal animation system comes in to play.

Each character and creature in *Half-Life* has a skeletal system complete with flexible joints. The texture maps are wrapped around this skeleton and behave much like skin: They stretch and skew based on the movements of the underlying bone structure. Although it may appear that this animation is much more demanding than *Quake 2*'s, the sequences actually require less RAM because there is no need to calculate every vertex of every polygon, just the changes in key points on the skeletal system. This in turn gave Valve the freedom to employ many more animation frames than in traditional games.

Half-Life's beautiful graphical effects rival even the splendid visuals of *Unreal*. Specular highlights are everywhere; weapon models, enemy armor, and even your own outfit is loaded with reflective surfaces. Light reflects off surfaces, which casts an eerie realness into the environments. When submerged in water, there is a fog effect employed that makes the water appear dense and murky; watching a pair of Ichthyosaurs fade into view from the depths is a truly terrifying experience. But where the game gains new ground is in its complex decal system.

Half-Life's engine permits textures to be graphically altered in real time. This allows for a detailed alpha blended bit map to be applied to any texture at any time. The effect adds an intense amount of realism to the game. When enemies are hit, the walls beyond them are splattered with blood. When a rocket hits a wall, it leaves a convincing blast mark. When you whack a wall with your crowbar, it results in a convincing notch. When you smack a computer terminal it sparks and leaves a burn mark. Unbreakable glass becomes shattered. And even if you leave an area and return at a later time, the marks remain as they were.

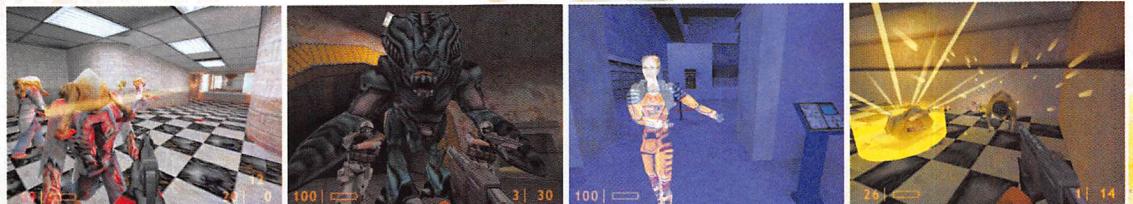
Each character and creature in *Half-Life* comes complete with a skeletal system with numerous flexible joints.

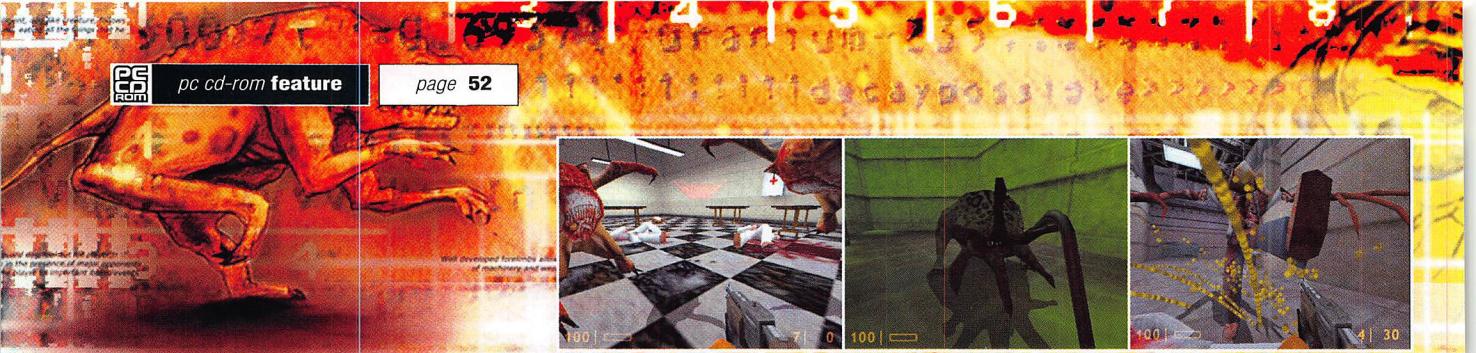


real intelligence

How do you programmatically deal with chaos? Obviously, there is no way to cover every possibility, but how close can you come? Valve must have asked themselves this very question when they set out to develop *Half-Life*'s AI. To demonstrate the complexity of the game's enemy intelligence, a specific scenario was included in our build that places players in a small room with a few walls and pillars for protection and three Marines for your disposal – if you're skilled enough that is. I remember my first attempt well...

I was hiding just beyond a wall and on the other side there were three Marines scouring the area, searching for any signs of life. Their orders were to kill anything that moved, and if they saw or heard me, I was as good as dead. They were verbally signaling to each other with phrases like "recon in position, all quiet!" and "area

continues



Half-Life's AI enrolls players in military training 101...

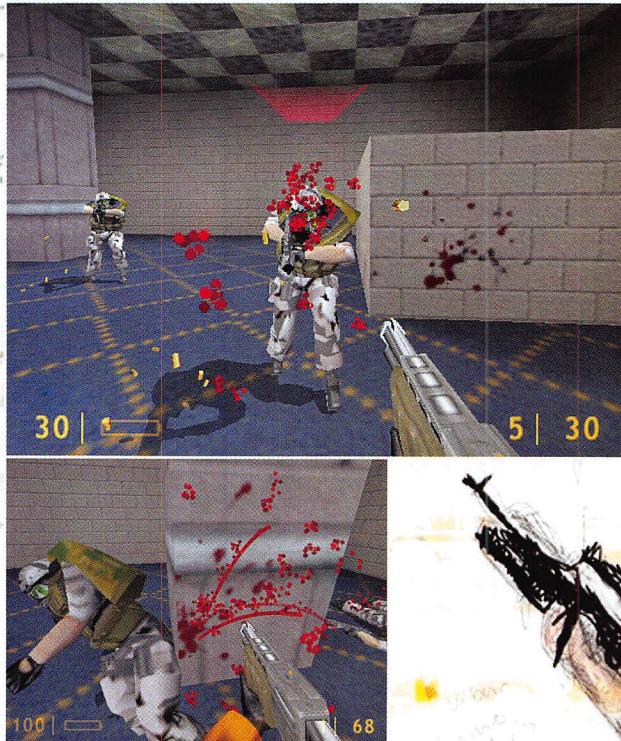
secured!" From the direction of their voices, I made an educated guess as to exactly where they were located in the room. I had a shotgun loaded and ready, but something told me that tossing one of my grenades over the wall would be a wise first move. In an effort to take them out with one strike, I blindly tossed one of the timed explosives over the wall and with a series of clanks it hit the floor and rolled to its destination. Not a second later I heard one of the Marines cry out "oh, shit!" while another yelled "take cover!" Another was wounded and screamed "medic!" They then spread out and, far too soon for my liking, began a coordinated assault.

A continual stream of lead was pelting the wall in front of me. As I backed away from the lethal spray, I heard a voice cry "fire in the hole!" and suddenly an all-too familiar clanking sound came from right behind me. A grenade landed at my feet leaving me only one option: run like hell towards the next wall for cover. Although I managed to escape immediate danger, I was hit on the way and another marine immediately began to shoot a flurry of bullets around the next corner, probably hoping that I would inadvertently run into this ambush. Thankfully, I chose to hunker down immediately. The three Marines were now working in unison, and they obviously knew what they were doing. One continuously tried to flush me out with grenades while the others waited in ambush. There was no time to sit and think, and running away was out of the question, as these men would just chase me down. What did I do? I paused the game and wiped the sweat from my forehead.

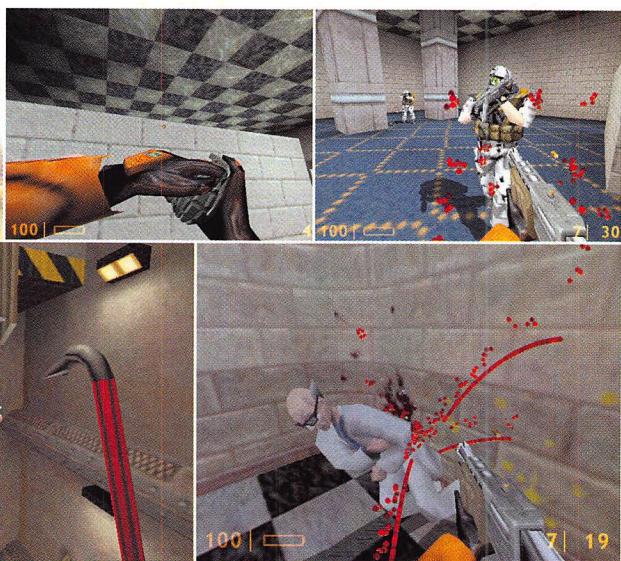
It took five attempts before I managed to succeed in killing all three Marines. Every maneuver I made, whether offensive or defensive, was counter-reacted to in an intelligent manner. This is when I realized that *Half-Life* is not just a story wrapped inside of the *Quake 2* engine. This game is something very special. Your enemies actually think. When they are hurt, they cry for help and run off to find health. When they detect a nearby threat, they dodge it. Sometimes they leave and return with additional troops. When they have to reload their weapons, they find cover first. And when the situation becomes dire, they lose their sanity and run at you like a lunatic with a pair of scissors.

Why the artificial intelligence in *Half-Life* is so impressive is obvious. Every gamer who plays this game will play it differently. One player may react boldly and rush into a tough situation, while another might try to attack stealthily. The point is that with any game with open 3D environments, players' actions are non-linear. The developers have produced extremely complex AI routines that can adjust to an ill-defined and highly dimensional situation. The enemies behave as if they are biological systems with emotions, instincts and senses. For the first time, playing against computer opponents is highly unpredictable and extremely challenging.

Unfortunately the scientists sometimes get in the way, or startle you... oh well.



The above and below shots depict the insanely entertaining test AI sequence that was included in our build. Notice how the Marines are never close to each other. Once they see you, they continually spread out and attempt to surround you. I even tried to use one of my laser-activated proximity mines on them, but one of the Marines simply crawled under the laser, and when he was at a safe distance, his squad mate detonated it by firing his machine gun at it on the wall. Witnessing this was nothing short of unbelievable. This scenario is one of the most intense experiences I have ever had in an FPS game, and each time it is played the result is unique. The biggest challenge is in trying to get through the sequence with just a crowbar.





sensory overload

[sensory overload]

Every creature in *Half-Life* has senses: They can hear, see, and smell. Some creatures have no eyes at all, but thinking you can run at them without being noticed would be a big mistake. Their hearing is so refined that if they detect your presence, you might as well kiss yourself goodbye. The best example of this in the game is when facing "The Tentacle."

A gigantic green arm built of roughly 1500 polygons with a huge claw at its head is terrifying in its own right, but when it has a sense of hearing that hones in on its target with pinpoint accuracy, fear takes on a whole new meaning. Footsteps alone give up your position, and you can't run for it; you'll be dead before you know it. If they get agitated, they tap around and they try to scare you. If they think you're there but they don't know where you are, they start tapping around in frustration. Fighting this beast requires a cunning strategy, and in the end, using your weapons creatively will likely be your ticket to freedom. (See shots at top of page)

Everything that makes a sound in real life, makes a sound in *Half-Life*: the light buzz of a Coke machine, the chatter of scientists contemplating their next equation, the scrape of a crate along the floor, the crackle of a sputtering wire. Crawling through metallic air ducts emanates a hollow tinny sound. Water rushes by with an authoritative roar. Jump below the surface and everything is genuinely muffled. When creatures are injured, they scream and cry in pain. And with every environment and varying surface, there is a unique reverberation.

This level of aural realism is achieved through a proprietary DSP (Digital Sound Processing) method. The sounds themselves are recorded without any effects and are then filtered through the processor, which adds the proper effect based on the environment that the player is currently in. Not only does this mimic reality, but it also ends up being extremely efficient, as the game requires one sample per sound. The DSP can even alter the inflection of a human voice to provide an appropriate accent.



The alien life shown above are all good examples of the game's other worldly theme. The Houndeye (top) is another creature that has no sense of vision. When attacking, it creates a sonic boom of sorts.

half-life deathmatch

[half-life deathmatch]

If you ask most *Quake 2* fans what they would like to see improved most about Deathmatch, they are likely to begin talking about latency and ping troubles. Valve's developers and testers are very aware of this and they are addressing the issue programmatically as well as creatively. We sat with Yahn Bernier, a software engineer at Valve currently working on *Half-Life*'s Deathmatch play, and he had plenty to say. "The network coding is a lot of the client side prediction that is necessary for trying to make the game playable over a high latency connection. With *Quake 2*, there's a limitation on the rate of commands that are sent to the server; there's a built-in delay on the client side. Before your command even leaves your machine you can have a significant delay, and that's really irritating to a lot of people. We've got some pretty serious champion-type Deathmatchers around here, so we listen to those guys and what they say about what makes a satisfying experience - but with an eye towards the fact that they may be little bit stringent on exactly what they mean. Like the Snarks, the bio-weapons [they lock on and seek their target]... If you're aiming in the general vicinity and shoot that thing off, even if you're on a 500 ms ping connection, it's gonna find you and start hitting you."

Some may think that a heat-seeking weapon is cheap, but it will force players of all skill levels to play defensively now and then. Valve has mentioned that there are other weapons that may or may not be balanced enough in multiplayer, and they might be disabled to some degree in Deathmatch. But they did hint that

because the *Quake* license allows them to utilize any of the existing weapons from *Quake* games, we may see the original Rocket Launcher or Nail Gun make an appearance for a little bit of retro gaming.

There are some other ideas on the table as well. Because of *Half-Life*'s skeletal animation, Valve can easily attach weapons at the right spots and have the bullets come out of the right portions of the body or even change body parts. One of the more interesting features will be a very easy way for people to put their own faces on their characters.

There is one problem with *Half-Life* in general: it is slated for release late summer/early fall '98. For many of us here at *Gamers' Republic*, that is too long to wait. But for now, we'll just continue to experiment with our build. We'll try to find every possible way to defeat the AI demo. We'll just play it again, and again. And we will never get bored. ☺

Half-Life's weapons



Half-Life's weaponry is very diverse and departs significantly from what other FPS titles have to offer. Whack your foes with a crowbar at close proximity, lay remote-control detonation traps and laser-activated proximity mines, burst your enemy's chest with a shotgun blast, or target them with your laser-sighted, heat-seeking rocket launcher... One of the more clever weapons is an actual living creature that chases down your enemy and bites them until it eventually self-destructs. This creature can also be used to distract enemies that prefer the way it tastes over human flesh. The weapons are not complete, but what we have seen is mighty satisfying.



"Grabbing the attention of gamers is very important"



"I wanted and had to create Daytona 2"

As *Daytona 2* fever increases, we were granted an audience with AM2 Producer Toshihiro Nagoshi for an in-depth interview on arguably the most spectacular racing game on the planet.

How has the development team changed since *Daytona 1* and *Scud Race*?

I used 70 to 80 percent of the *Scud Race* team for *Daytona*, but only about 30 percent of the *Scud Race* team for *Daytona 2*. I borrowed team members from the *Virtua Fighter 3*, *Virtua Cop* and *Fighting Vipers* teams. Of course, keeping the same people speeds everything up because they all know the basics, but I wanted everyone to approach the development of *Daytona 2* with a fresh outlook. In total, there are about 20 people in the *Daytona 2* team, which I started to put together after we finished *Scud Race* in March 1997.

Why did you choose to create a sequel to *Daytona USA*?

I wanted and had to create *Daytona 2*. When *Daytona* became a big hit there was a lot of talk about creating *Daytona 2*, however I was so surprised at the success that I wasn't confident I could come up with new ideas to make an even better game. I knew I couldn't do it immediately, so between *Daytona* and *Daytona 2* I wanted to squeeze in just one more driving game incorporating new elements. That was *Scud Race*. However, even while I was creating *Scud Race*, I knew that after that *Daytona 2* was waiting for me.

Did you research *Model 3* with *Scud Race*?

Yes. I wanted to actually get to grips with

the *Model 3* before *Daytona 2*. I did help out with *Virtua Fighter 3* before that, so I had a chance to learn about the *Model 3* then as well. I pretty much knew all about the hardware before *Scud Race*.

How did you come up with the title for "Battle on the Edge"?

It wasn't me that decided the title, the staff chose it. In the game, you have your car, the other cars and the wall on the side of the track. It is a battle between all three of you in a furious race! It was the theme for *Daytona* as well, and we didn't want people to forget that.

Was it your intention to make *Daytona 2* even more exciting than before?

Yes it was, but I did worry about which areas I should change. If I changed too much, then it would become a different game. In the end I decided to make it a more dynamic game and appeal to the players by emphasizing the visual graphics through the crashes, camera work and deformation of the players' cars.

Where do think the fascination of stock car racing lies?

When I first started working on *Daytona*, I didn't understand the fascination. Then I unexpectedly had the chance to visit Lockheed Martin in Daytona Beach who were working with us to create the *Model 2*. The *Daytona 500* was on while I was there and I managed to get a ticket, and I thought it was very interesting. The significance is that although you drive in circles, if you just keep watching, it doesn't get boring because after a while you get to appreciate the small moments of drama and the crashes. The point is, in reality if something is interesting, then an accurate simulation is usually interesting as well.

Until I first saw a stock car racing I thought that kind of race game would be boring, and if I hadn't had the chance to see it for real, then I would have never created *Daytona 1* or *2*. *Battle on the Edge* really captures that "taste" and energy of the cars scraping by each other, and I think we've done a great job of being able to recreate that great feeling in the game.

In order to create the tracks, did you visit

any actual courses?

We did check a few locations, in particular we visited Charlotte in America. Many of the new team members didn't have any experience of racing games when the project started, so I made them visit Daytona Beach once again. Although it's been four years since *Daytona*, the stock car race hasn't changed much and we still have many of the original videos and photographs we took before. However, it is better to see it with your own eyes because it's easier to understand.

What did you use for reference when designing the cars?

We used the cars that were entered into the NASCAR, but we couldn't just use their licensed designs. We had to create our own Americanized replicas of all the logos and designs. We researched American packaging of candy makers and battery and oil companies, etc. We didn't use any real sponsorship stickers, we just used our imagination to create original designs.

How does the AI work for the other cars?

That's really down to our know-how of driving games and dependent on the player's skill level. In order to balance this, the most critical element is the enemy car. Simply put, the cars are always positioned to give you something to do. You're never left behind so far that you end up racing on your own. This isn't some artificially unnatural mechanism, but a way of developing the race by allowing the other cars to balance the overall game. That's why when you leave the pits, or after you have a crash, you can soon meet up with the other cars. If this doesn't happen, then it becomes boring.

Are the drift and slip stream techniques the same as *Scud Race*?

No, they're much closer to ones we used in *Daytona*. Most people have probably forgotten the feeling of *Daytona* because it has been such a long time, but those game maniacs out there will notice the difference! This time we've created the cars so that they are "easy," "normal" and "hard." With "hard," the car's control is even more wild than *Daytona*. "Normal" is basically

daytona usa 2

battle on the edge

As the latest Model 3 extravaganza powers into arcades, we interview Producer Toshihiro Nagoshi about his creation

the same as *Daytona* while "easy" isn't that excessive at all. It is difficult to get a good track time with "easy," but it is a lot simpler to reach the goal.

What were your initial course ideas?

I did want to emphasize the lengths of the courses. This time I wanted to have courses that were even shorter and longer than *Daytona*, so we created them with this in mind. Then we considered what visuals we wanted to support these courses. We first chose the city for the super long course. For the medium course we unexpectedly had a lot of ideas to play with, and to a certain degree you can see the result of our trips to Disney World in there!

Were there any specific difficulties with designing such a long course?

Despite the amount of CG design work, there weren't any real problems. However, the more ideas you have for the roadside scenery, the harder it becomes to decide on the ones to use. It was fairly easy to come up with the themes for each course, such as the city or theme park. We redesigned the city course many times. It was also my plan to create very realistic objects by using real textures.

Were there any ideas you had for the courses that you couldn't include in the final game?

For the theme park there were a lot of ideas we abandoned. We had a few ideas like the giant red skull monster, which comes over the track! That was too difficult so we decided not to do them. We also had a few ideas that we gave up on, but then later on we managed to get working. However, the most difficult thing was to get the timing right. Creating 3D objects wasn't that difficult because the hardware is really good and it can produce a large number of polygons. However, from the point of producing a race game, I didn't want to create scenery or effects that got in the way of the game itself. The jet coaster was one idea like this, but we got that just right. Another one was the giant swinging boat at the start of the stage. In order that it swings towards you just as you are approaching it takes perfect timing. We sampled the player's car as he approaches the boat, calculating the relative speed and position of their car in rela-

tion to the required start of the boat's swing. As long as the player doesn't brake, the timing of the boat's swing will always match the player's approach. We put a lot of effort into getting the speed and swing of the boat perfect!

When did you first decide to include game features that change depending on which lap you're on?

It was a natural occurrence through the development process. They aren't difficult to do. In fact, lap dependent effects were in *Daytona*, but they were so plain that probably nobody noticed them. I think the flying pattern of the sea gulls changed each time. With *Daytona 2* we have a lot of effects. For the theme park there are ten big features, but there are numerous small effects all over the place as well. If you include the way that the other cars crash, then it's almost impossible to count. Depending on the car's situation, crashing effects are completely different.

How did you design a suitable cabinet?

This time the sound was the most important element of the cabinet. Obviously for the deluxe cabinet, the car's motion was important, but foremost was accomplishing an excellent sound system. I was sure that we were going to be able to create some great BGM, so I asked AM4 to give me some good speakers and a good woofer. However, it took a lot of time. Because we have a 16 cabinet link up capability, it is important to reduce the individual cabinet cost. We were worried about the overall cabinet price, so we came up with a lot of great ideas to make the cabinet look great without it costing too much. For example, in the overhead cabinet display it looks like there are three pink neon strip lights. However, in reality, there is only one, but we've used mirrors to reflect the image so that it looks like there are three there.

Why such a colorful design?

I'd like to think that a player puts his money in, looks at the visuals, plays the game and then decides whether or not the game is fun. However, in reality before they actually play the game, the cabinet catches their eye. Grabbing the attention of gamers is a very important factor. There are so many

similar racing games that it is important to consider various elements which stand out from the others. While Japanese amusement centers are very bright, American game centers are fairly dark, so the yellow cabinet color helps the game stand out from the others.

Can you explain what the functions of the Direct Rolling Motorized System and the Impact Generator are?

The DRMS is used to reproduce the effects felt from the car's movement. In order to match the player's quick handling and sharp cornering, the DRMS rolls from side to side, giving a better sensation of actually being in a car. *Daytona* has some pretty wild movement, which we want the players to be able to experience. The player can actually rock the car himself with his own weight. Although the tail can slide as well, it can be a little difficult to get the cabinet to do this. If it swings too far, then it becomes dangerous. However, the DRMS conveys the fast handling directly to the player, and this is a great feeling. The IG re-creates the impact shock of being hit from behind or breaking suddenly.

Was it your intention to push the Model 3 to the limits?

Yes it was. At that



"Please play with all your might!"

"I wanted to use as many [Model 3] features as possible"



Drivers...
start your
engines

time I decided to go for the final Step 2 version of the Model 3. However, now I'm doing *Spikeout*, and with both games I wanted to use as many features as possible, so I didn't regret making better use of the Model 3 later. One of the new features which we were able to accomplish for the first time doesn't have any relation to the users, but for those in the industry, it's a very good technique. The expert course is very long, so a large volume of textures is essential. The on board memory ever since Model 2 has been substantial, but the number of textures you can generate at any one time is severely limited. The RAM for the textures is very expensive, so although we could increase the memory (and texture quality) if we wanted to, the cost would go up as well. We're always troubled with this. Even for *Virtua Fighter 3* and *Scud Race* we had this difficulty. This time for *Daytona 2* we wanted to be able to read and exchange the textures in real-time without stopping the game. The amount of textures we were displaying were the same as they always were, but for the first time we were able to connect the different textures together smoothly. If we hadn't been able to do this we would have been in a lot of trouble, because the expert course is so long. Without exchanging the textures, we would have had to keep the same textures for the entire course, which would have been very boring.

Did you sample all the special sound effects yourselves?
Yes we did. However, the sounds are different from the NASCAR cars. We used a lot of library sounds and arranged them until we got the right sound for us. We had to start experimenting with the sound effects early on in the project, because they take a lot of time. It's really difficult getting a good sound in one shot. By mixing samples and library sounds with other completely different effects, we were able to get the engine noises we were after. Actually, to most people's surprise, it isn't the BGM, but the sound effects that most people pay attention to. The users are quite particular about this.

Why did you go to New York to record the soundtrack?
There are a lot of recording studios in Japan, so it wouldn't have been a problem to have recorded the BGM here, but I'm always hearing how if you record music in America

it's somehow different, so I wanted to experience this. However, it costs quite a lot of money, so I wouldn't have been able to do it, except for a major title. *Daytona 2* was my first chance to have a shot of recording in New York and since it was an American Rock soundtrack, it made sense to do it in America anyway. At exactly the same time, I made contact with an sound engineer over there. While I was over there, the engineer took a look at the game and suggested that *Winger* would be perfect for the recording. I hadn't heard of them before, but they were highly recommended, so I went for them. They recorded four tracks for us, one for each course plus one for the advertising. Watch for the special remix soundtrack coming in August [in Japan] as well.

What in *Daytona 2* are you most proud of?

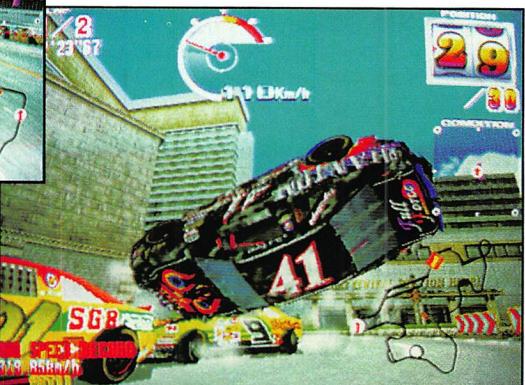
The most frightening thing was that I didn't want to let down all the users who had been looking forward to the sequel. It is a very lonely perspective, but I was very nervous. When we released the game and put it in the arcades, I was very relieved not to hear the people playing it say that it wasn't what they had hoped for. I hope that everyone can be absorbed in the multi-player capability now possible with the communication link, and that they can enjoy the live monitor as well. It's more than just simply looking at the race scene via different camera work. We've designed it to look like a real multi-channel sports station like they have in America. Of course, playing the game alone is fun, but I hope that everyone takes advantage of racing against a lot of other people.

Do you have a message for your fans in America?

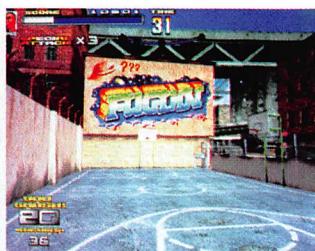
Because we were able to sell so many *Daytona* cabinets, we were able to have the opportunity to create a *Daytona 2*. For a developer, a sequel is always very difficult. There's a lot of pressure, but being able to create a sequel is a really great feeling. This time, if you all love *Daytona 2* then maybe I'll have the chance to create a *Daytona 3*. With this, I mean it would be great if we could create a distinctive brand of action/racing game. If everyone enjoys playing *Daytona 2*, then I can promise that it'll allow me to create an even better driving game next time. So please play with all your might!

Toshihiro Nagoshi, thank you.

Gamers' Republic would like to thank Sega of Japan and Mr. Toshihiro Nagoshi. Sega is currently working overtime to get their newest project, *Spikeout*, ready for its first public test. More info on *Daytona 2* next issue.



"If you all love *Daytona 2* then maybe I'll have a chance to create *Daytona 3*"



A brawl in the mall Sprawling, unconventional urban fighting arenas

By David Hodgson

spikeout

Digital Battle Online

Last issue we presented some in-game battle shots. This time, take a look at the exquisite level designs, which are 80 times the size of those in *Virtua Fighter 3*. Then salivate in anticipation of choosing from a band of four superbly textured roughnecks clad in the latest street wear (no fruity cowboy hats and boots for these street punks). Powered by a souped-up Model 3 Step 2.0, the characters are nearly *VF3* quality, an awesome accomplishment given their large numbers.

From a running video, we saw *VF*-style gameplay (including a female Sarah-like character with her trademark moves), with uppercutting of opponents through buildings, special power attacks that knock rival gang members down like bowling pins, as well as special tag-team moves allowing one player to hold a rival in a "full nelson" while the other smacks him about. We then viewed a rather blood-thirsty confrontation between four *Spikeout* players involving a crowbar and an elbow drop from a second story apartment, all to the familiar grunts and slaps of *VF3*. The result? A huge leap forward in fighting games.



Such incredible visuals and A.I. are achieved by separate Model 3 boards powering each set of four fighters

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There is an electric anticipation crackling around each and every new Square release. *Parasite Eve* is Square's latest source of energy, but with its emphasis on spectacle and cinematics, is it the illuminating experience we have come to expect from Square? Opinions will be mixed on this one. But opinions will not be mixed on the latest install-

ment in the Contra series - *C: the Contra Adventure* tarnishes the reputation this grand series has garnered throughout the years. At least Nintendo did things right with the sorely overdue update to the 16-bit classic, *F-Zero*. Here is an example of how rich a next generation game can be while still maintaining the simplicity and style of a classic.



GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

Banjo-Kazooie	A
Bottom of the 9th	C
Crime Killers	C+
Commandos	A-
Contra	C-
Dominion	D-
F-Zero X	A-
Fox Sports Soccer	C
ISS '98 - N64	A-
ISS '98 - PS	B-
Master of Monsters	D+
Mech Commander	B+
NCAA	C
Parasite Eve	B
Waialae Golf	C-
Wargames	B
WWF Warzone - N64	B-
WWF Warzone - PS	C+
World Grand Prix	C

A+
A
A
B+
B
B-
C-
C
C-
D+
D
D-
F

[A+ to A] Games in this bracket are the indubitable cream of the crop. They feature the very best in visual presentation, and are excellent in both initial and long term playability. The very best video game of its type, or an extremely close approximation thereof. *Example: Gran Turismo*

[A- to B] Games in this bracket are excellent, solid and highly playable pieces of software, although they lack minor polish to become truly outstanding. Slight graphical glitching coupled with a marginally disappointing ending may mar an otherwise exalted release. *Example: Tenchu*

[B- to C] Games in this bracket may have some great elements to them, but these are let down by one or two quite major problems, such as a limited movement, irritating sound or speech, and a lack of foresight in the level design. Passable entertainment - nothing more. *Example: Pitfall 3D*

[C- to D] Games in this bracket require serious help in two or more areas. Perhaps the control responds horribly and the characters animate poorly. Although a game of this caliber may have had a great initial concept, it was never fully realized in the final stages of design. *Example: MK Mythologies: Sub Zero*

[D- to F] Very rarely will you come across a game of this lack of quality. A complete dearth of vision, a determination to remove any semblance of gameplay or fun, and particular attention made to use none of the most rudimentary of the system's proprietary tools. *Example: Fantastic Four*

1. Games marked in **RED** are highly recommended for your gaming collection.

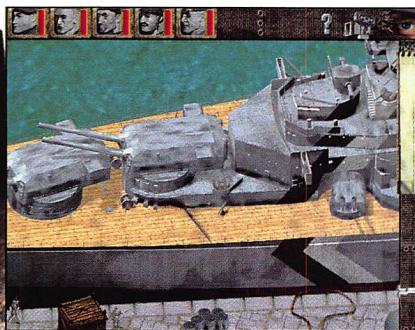
2. Games marked in **BLUE** should be avoided completely.

(Subject to the reviewer's personal preferences, it can be generally accepted that any game scoring a B or higher is a great way to spend your gaming evening. Games scoring a low D or F should be microwaved for three seconds and returned.)





I think I was halfway through level six of *Commandos* when I quit. Totally. I dropped my mouse in disgust, and walked away from what just might be one of the most annoyingly frustrating games I've ever played. After an uncountable amount of restarts and about five hours of stressful playtime, I had enough, and plopped down in front of the TV. No more than ten minutes had passed before I found myself back on my computer, enjoying *Commandos* once again. This is an evil, evil game.



commandos

Lead your troops into battle...

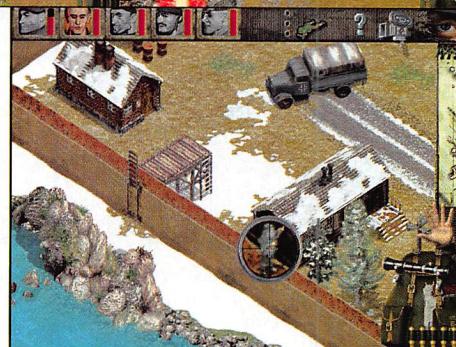
killing Nazis was never so much fun!

By Ryan Lockhart

I have no idea what *The Simpsons* has to do with the subject of dead Nazi bodies, but it was while watching this show when I figured out exactly what I had been doing wrong, and where I should be dumping the soldiers I'd been quietly killing.

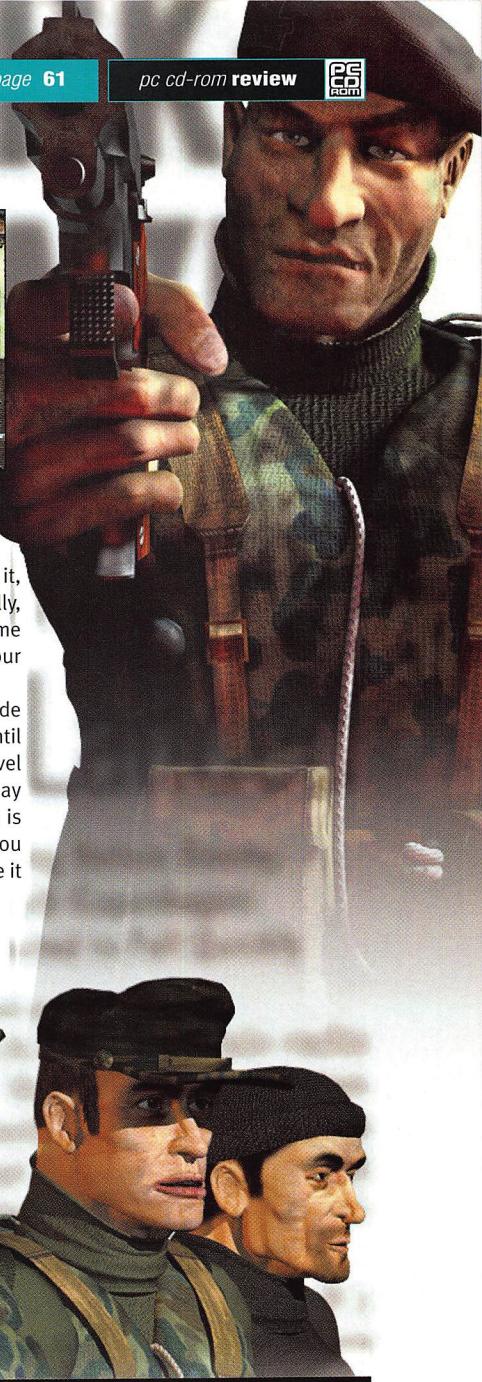
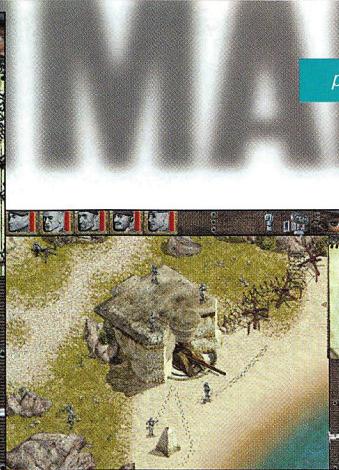
You see, *Commandos* doesn't let you go. It has that type of addicting gameplay that keeps you thinking, even when you're far away from your computer. The game presents a complex puzzle of sorts, gives you plenty of options on what to do, and leaves the exact method up to your liking. And once you start, things you once thought as important, like sleep, for example, suddenly don't really seem to matter anymore. To quickly sum up the game, *Commandos* is a real-time strategy title, in which you have to get from point A to point B with your entire troop; and while there's hundreds of different ways to do this, there's thousands of ways to screw up.

You'll be in control of up to six different commandos, each having their own personality and the unique skills needed to complete the mission, similar in a small way to the *A-Team*... but not as silly. This is where the magic of *Commandos* truly shines, as you need to find out which ability of your team members is suited for each situation. Will you snipe the soldier from afar, and then use your Spy to quickly poison the guard who will almost immediately notice his dead comrade? Or



THREE VICTORIES WON IN FRANCE

French and Yanks in Paris



better yet, do you try to distract the second guard with the Green Beret's noise device before killing his partner, and hope he doesn't return back to his post until you're done carting the body away? While this might sound simple, you'll have to make an enormous amount of these decisions per level, and most of them are much more complex and have many more factors to worry about. And if you blow it, the alarm might be sounded, and the amount of guards you'll have to pass could quickly double. Thankfully, though, despite often being outnumbered ten-to-one, the odds are still stacked in your favor: At any time you can view the "line of sight" each enemy soldier has (which is used to base your movements around), your commandos have a selection of cool equipment they can use, and they can take a few hits before dying.

While *Commandos* does indeed seem a bit too hard at times, the game gives you such a sense of pride that, when you beat each level, it's easy to forget the hell you just went through. That is, of course, until

someone else in the office lets you know they went through the same level in half the time... but still. *Commandos* is very fun and addicting to play (in a demented sort of way), has an incredible look and feel, and is one of the best PC games I've played this year. Simply put, if you enjoy strategy games at all, and don't mind a bit of stress, you owe it to yourself to give *Commandos* a try. ☺



★ A BRIEF Q&A WITH ERIC ADAMS - PRODUCER OF COMMANDOS ★

HOW LONG HAS *COMMANDOS* BEEN IN DEVELOPMENT?

Work was started last spring, so it's been in development for about 14 months. This is Pyro Studio's first game, who are located in Madrid. Up until recently they were the primary distributor for console and PC games in Spain. They realized they could make good games themselves and put a development team together, and delivered a proposal to us for three games. Out of those games, *Commandos* had the best premise.

WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH WENT INTO *COMMANDOS*?

The lead designer, Ignacio Perez, did a lot of background research on not only the commandos history but also on the different unique missions of WWII. In *Commandos*, you'll not only find those missions, but you'll also find a little bit of the Hollywood WWII films. For example, we have missions from *Where Eagles Dare* and *The Dirty Dozen*. So what we tried to do is bring some of the big screen epic action, and yet retain the realism and remain true to the history of the commandos.

HOW WOULD YOU CLASSIFY "*COMMANDOS*," WHO IS THIS GAME MADE FOR?

Commandos is a hard game to classify. It's not designed to be a totally realistic reproduction of command and combat in WWII. *Commandos* is more designed for people who want a lot of action and a good brain workout. It's for people who want to relive classic WWII movies, and at the same time play a great puzzle game. *Commandos* is an RTS, but not a resource management game; it's small scale and manageable.

HOW DOES THE MULTIPLAYER MODE WORK?

It's a co-op mode, in which up to six players can play against the computer. All 20 missions are available, and the way it works, you and any number of buddies work together as a team to complete the objectives. On M-Player we're offering voice communication, but we can't do that over TCP connection, so we'll offer a hot-key chat and visual marking system.

■ GAMEPLAY IS UNIQUE AND ADDICTING
■ GRAPHICS ARE INCREDIBLY DETAILED

■ MULTIPLE WAYS TO DEFEAT EACH LEVEL
■ REQUIRES A HUGE AMOUNT OF PATIENCE TO SUCCEED

REPUBLICSOLYS...

WHILE *COMMANDOS* DOESN'T OFFER ANYTHING NEW IN THE WAY OF TECHNOLOGY, THE GREAT GAMEPLAY AND DETAILED GRAPHICS MORE THAN MAKE UP FOR IT. A BENCHMARK 2D TITLE.

A-

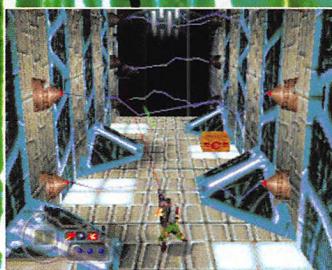
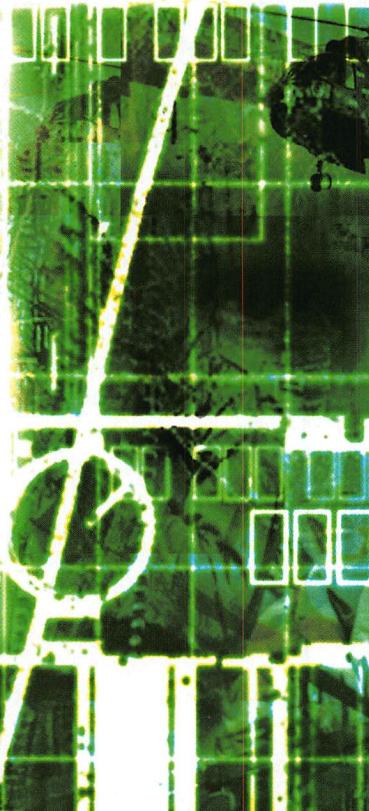
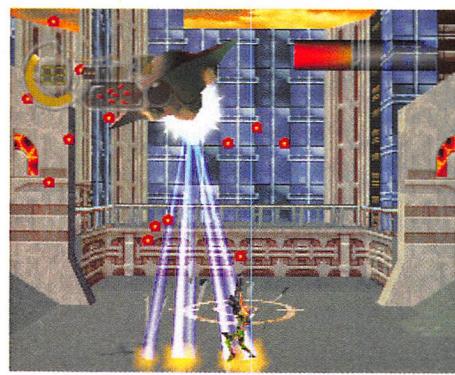


One of the most indelible action series of all time continues on the PlayStation...

Contra is one of those games where you keep asking questions. Questions like, why is there so much black mist obscuring so many of the levels to the point of harassment? Like, shouldn't the graphics benefit from such a thick coating of ubiquitous blackness and receive added touches of detail? Like, would it really take that much effort to better animate and design those poor little soldiers, who are about as threatening as a troop of plastic army men? Like, can a camera really be that illogically placed? Like, if the game has *Contra* somewhere in the title, shouldn't it pump you with an endless supply of manic, unforgettable action sequences, not frustrating, insipid levels that culminate in embarrassing boss encounters?

Answers to these questions and many others will never be answered, but to play *C: The Contra Adventure* from the perspective of a passionate fan, they will be even more pressing. But even as a gamer who has never been introduced to the devilish intensity the series has maintained in its 16 and 8-bit days, to play this installment will leave you with the same disappointing impression that, like *Contra: Legacy of War* before it, a forced, incompetent attempt at an action game has been made.

There is no reason why the game couldn't have turned out better than it did; there are hints of the old *Contra* look and feel, most notably in the first stage, which starts out in a 2.5D setting,



By Brady Fiechter

contra

The revered series is not about to go away

But is it time to leave well enough alone?



by on a highly detailed, futuristic transport that houses four sections of resistance.

After this somewhat encouraging start, subsequent levels degenerate into sloppy overhead and behind-the-back views, where any semblance of fun is left an afterthought bound to the first stage. Near the end, the game tries to sweep clean the mess it's made of itself by returning to more side scrolling and level design reminiscent of past *Contra* titles. But try as it may, it only manages to make a bigger mess.

with side scrolling, large explosions, lots of bullets zipping by, and respectable music - a toned down version of exactly what a *Contra* game should be. Every level has a mid-boss, and in this first one, a small ship uses a scintillating laser arsenal as it shreds your path until you can bring it down with, of course, your laser and spread guns. The level continues towards a promising final boss, who whisk

■ FIRST & LAST LEVELS HINT OF A TRUE CONTRA TITLE
■ NO 2 PLAYER MODE ADDS TO THE PAIN

■ THE ENEMIES LOOK LIKE CARDBOARD CUT-OUTS
■ IF YOU MUST MAKE IT 3D, MAKE IT LOOK GOOD!

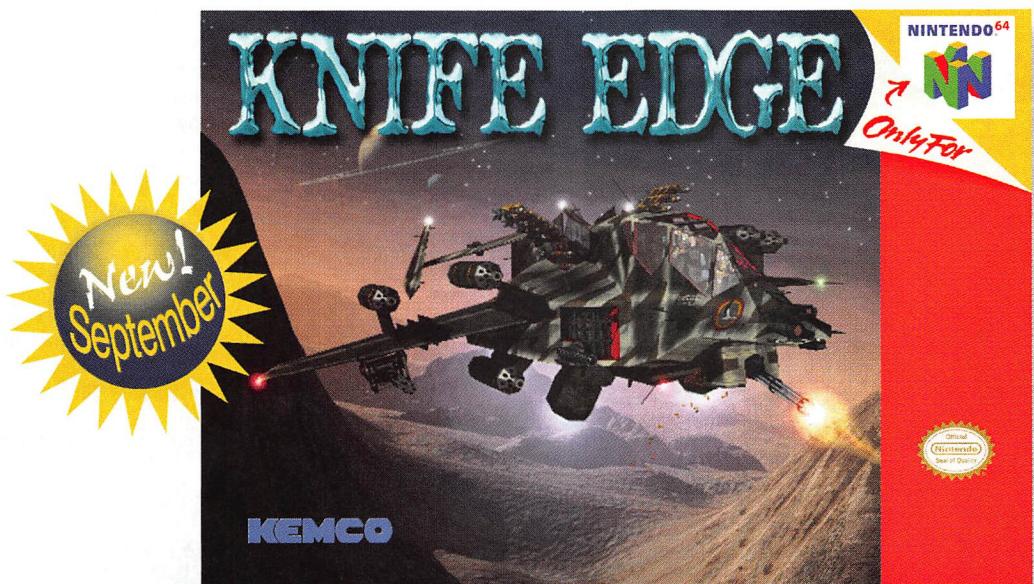
REPUBLIC SAYS...

KONAMI HAS TWO OPTIONS: DEVELOP CONTRA IN HOUSE BY THE HANDS OF PROGRAMMERS WHO KNOW HOW TO DO IT RIGHT, OR KILL THE SERIES. I PREFER THE FIRST CHOICE.



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Intense shooting action



In-game cinema sequences



Gigantic animated bosses

KNIFE EDGE: Nose Gunner

Blast off for revolutionary game play action with KEMCO® Knife Edge: Nose Gunner™ for Nintendo 64! Knife Edge combines the fast-paced action of a sci-fi shoot-em-up with the thrilling joyride of an arcade-style flight game. Beautiful 3D polygon-constructed extraterrestrial environments fill the screen. The pioneer colonies on Mars are invaded and you have to shoot your way through enemy craft and ground defense placements. KEMCO's innovative game pass generation system computes the player's choice of assault craft, navigator character, difficulty level, and enemy kill ratio to open up new branches and routes through the hostile environments and introduce new enemy attack configurations. Knife Edge offers a new game play experience every time.

Coming Soon On N64:

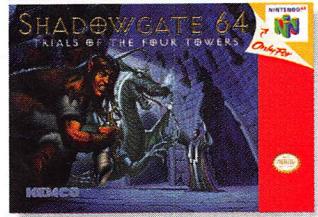
Coming October



Coming November



Coming December



KEMCO



Exclusively Distributed By:
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An initial wince at the game's simple appearance soon turns to a mouth agape stare as the incredible speed of F-Zero X knocks you back in your seat.



Back in 1991, a little hardware feature called Mode 7 powered a thrilling, futuristic racing game from Mr. Miyamoto and Nintendo. An instant classic was born with *F-Zero*, its speed, challenge, and next generation graphics providing a kind of experience unavailable on any other home console at the time. Now seven years later and entering a more crowded and sophisticated gaming environment, this highly anticipated 64bit update has dutifully managed to capture the intensity and appeal of the original. Nintendo's star EAD team and Shigeru Miyamoto have once again worked their magic.

Early on and even now, there was criticism that the game's fairly basic look makes it less of a hardware showcase than the original. But from a more pragmatic point of view, *F-Zero X* is actually quite stunning; you get a lot in exchange for simple polygonal models and lack of trackside detail. The fruits of this barter begin with 60 frames per second visuals that impart a profoundly smooth and exhilarating sense of speed. It continues with the rather awesome sight of racing against 29 CPU competitors in



f-zero X

By Mike Hobbs

60 frames per second plus thirty on screen competitors

equals the most intense racing experience to be found on the N64.

The seven year old classic gets updated with style

one player mode and ends with a silky smooth two and four player split screen. All these enhancements over the original easily justify its basic look.

F-Zero eschewed weapons and power-ups in its interpretation of futuristic racing, and *FZX* proudly continues that tradition. That's not to imply that there's nothing to do but methodically go around the track. Rather, a simple yet entertaining design concept carried over from the original fuels the on track action. Your ship carries with it a certain amount of energy that is depleted whenever you hit something and when you employ a speed boost, which is activated after the first lap. If you expend a lot of energy boosting forward to catch competitors or open up a lead, it can leave your ship vulnerable to the smallest of wall bumps. With all energy depleted, your craft is sent flying in a shower of sparks, and it's game over. Near each start/finish line are strips that refill energy as you fly over them in a moment of generally great relief. It makes each lap a balancing act that is simple yet highly involving. You'll also make use of strategically placed boost pads scattered along the tracks.

Being a game that benefits from Miyamoto's supervision, the control in *F-Zero X* is first-rate. The



Three cups and 18 initial courses provide a wealth of track design ideas.

analog stick controls the gross movements of your craft, while tight cornering is augmented by a drifting control activated by the Z and R triggers. Each ship, within its own parameters of speed, handling, and boosting ability, feels right and proper in its control responses, and finding a favorite is easy. This is especially true after opening up a whopping thirty different vehicles. You can also play with each ship's balance between acceleration and maximum speed.

It is the course design that helps define the nature of any racing game, and *F-Zero X* does an incredible job of enhancing the inherent speed with thrilling track layouts. There are times when you'll go from a high speed, dipping straightaway right onto the outside of a tube. Or you may find yourself being turned upside down as the track twists and loops with equilibrium-throwing results. You'll also encounter long, stomach dropping jumps of massive proportion. And while there is a bit of fog to deal with and fade-in of the track, it's smooth and distant enough to dispel distraction.



Many are no doubt excited about *FZX*'s four player capability, and I'm happy to report that it works exceedingly well - at least within the constraints of playing in only one quarter of the screen. The frame rate has no difficulty, though it's obviously not 60, and the field is only four vehicles, but you can't expect the CPU to conceivably draw what would be 120 competitors on screen. Two player mode is exceptional, though you are also confined to only four racers. As good as the multiplayer modes are, however, I think it's the one player full screen game with all 30 vehicles on course that is the true *F-Zero X* experience.

This game's only real competition will come in the form of Psygnosis' *Wipeout 64*, which also features a four player mode along with weapons, power-ups and a good pedigree. But no matter how well that turns out, it won't be able to touch *FZX*'s sense of speed and elegant simplicity. Nintendo's greatest strength lies in its ability to create games that satisfy immediately and forever, by providing an honest and deceptively deep play experience that understands exactly its own intentions. *F-Zero X* exemplifies this philosophy wonderfully. »



REPUBLIC SAYS...

■ EXHILARATING SPEEDS AND COURSE DESIGNS.
■ EXCELLENT CONTROL AND VARIETY OF VEHICLES.

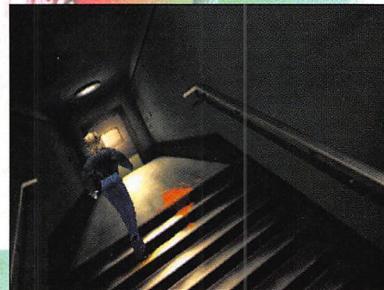
■ HIGHLY PLAYABLE TWO AND FOUR PLAYER MODES.
■ GOOD QUALITY AND FITTING MUSIC.

NINTENDO MADE A SMART MOVE WITH *F-ZERO X* IN CONCENTRATING HEAVILY ON FRAME RATE, SPEED, AND MULTIPLAYER CAPABILITIES INSTEAD OF POLYGONAL COMPLEXITY.





Square's artistic vision is so powerful and poignant in *Parasite Eve* that the images themselves become a narrative voice. The game is touted as a cinematic RPG, where the disquieting reality of the outer consequences of the story is the key to the storytelling, not the story itself. There is a feverish excess to the visuals that is wonderfully absorbing, inescapably inviting, but Square seems more concerned with spectacle than telling an actual story. How long we wish to remain bound to *Parasite Eve*'s world, hinged on images and allusion alone, is the key question.



By Brady Fiechter

parasite eve

Visually arresting and eerily captivating,

the first truly cinematic RPG is born

The answer is a bit complicated and depends upon our sense of credulity within the story, which revolves around a haunting, perversely beautiful being named Eve, born from mutating mitochondria. Ada, a police officer in New York, finds herself mysteriously impervious to Eve's sickening ability to send the human body into flames, melting their flesh for genetic manipulations. Eve's growth and plot to breed toward a world domination is where the potentially interesting setup begins to head into asinine directions, and the further the game strays off the path of a sensible plot, the harder it is to suspend our disbelief in the surroundings. The rules are estab-



lished, boundaries are set, but the game can't properly contain itself within its own fiction; it's too difficult to buy into what is being told. When the ineffectual nature of the story is made apparent, the battles do a good job of supporting any dead weight left after the captivating environments have carried its load. Enemies are encountered in set areas within each setting, generated every time Ada passes through. Once a battle is incited, the enemy quickly darts around a confined space, requiring Ada to cast an attack grid in their vicinity. There is not a deep level of complexity to the battles, and spells are disappointingly limited to two offensive attacks, but the unique setup continually delivers an adequate level of tension. The enemies are so intricately crafted, exquisitely detailed and imaginatively conceived, one special effect extravaganza after another, a sense of





curiosity is fostered going into each new level.

It is a bit of a surprise, given the supreme nature of the beasts encountered lurking in the dank subway system, hiding in the musky museum corridors, to see Eve in the final battle a lackluster and glitchy model. The game builds its decadent style, each scene better than the last, but fails to inspire in its finale in a number of ways; it's as if Square grew bored with their design and story and



decided to put a stop to it all, not caring to add satisfying closure. The first project developed by Square USA, perhaps the game was a bit of an experiment, a test as to the affect a cinematic experience would have on an anxiously receptive audience. Square was given the opportunity to indulge in a wanton display of CG cinemas and backdrops, yet neglected to attend to little details like animations and object continuity - a peculiar absence when atmosphere is the machine driving the game. These and several other flaws are unfortunately entangled in the many visual triumphs of the game, but I quite honestly lost focus on nearly all the low points and was constantly enthralled with the cinemas and absorbing conceptualization of the darker side of New York. But unfortunately, as a touted RPG, *Parasite Eve*'s empty story cannot be ignored; like a towline, it holds the game back, keeping it from completely breaking free and soaring. *



■ POWERFUL SENSE OF STYLE - CG SCENES ARE GRIPPING
■ BATTLES ARE SIMPLE BUT INTERESTING

■ UNIQUE SCORE IS PUNCTUATED BY DISQUIETING OPERA
■ RIDICULOUS STORY IS THE ONLY DESTRUCTIVE FLAW

DON'T EXPECT PARASITE EVE TO BE RICH IN RPG ASPECTS. AS THE TITLE STATES, IT'S A "CINEMATIC RPG," AND THE EXPERIENCE IS CRUCIALLY LINKED TO THE AMBIENCE.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

B





command & conquer: red alert retaliation

By Dave Rees

A Hefty Dollop of RTS hits the PS!

Counterstrike and Aftermath together equals Retaliation!

Relative to the PC version, Westwood's *Command and Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation* looks washed out, is displayed in a prohibitive resolution, lacks much of the detailed animation, has an engine that struggles at times, and is very difficult to control with the PlayStation pad. It just seems too easy to evaluate the game simply by mere comparison to the PC series, but that would be an easy way out. In this case, it just wouldn't be fair.

The game is not only a fusion of both *Red Alert* expansion packs (*Aftermath* and *Counterstrike*), but also employs some new elements while managing to maintain most of the features of its PC counterparts. For PlayStation owners who love real time strategy games, this game has it all: exclusive maps (one is actually two islands shaped like the letter C with an ampersand between them), some original cinemas, an original musical score and great presentation.

Although the control scheme is a bit complex due to the inherent limitations of the PS pad, it still manages to be a somewhat smooth playing experience. However, I highly recommend using the PS mouse, as it is much more akin to this type of game.

The mere fact that this game runs as smoothly as it does on the PS alone is enough to give it merit. In fact, the only time slowdown does occur is during multiplayer games when playing against several computer opponents, or after building a ridiculously massive army. Otherwise, the game runs without a hitch. And if you are already used to the more wide-open experience that the PC offers, then you may be disappointed by the limited visibility of the PS version. But all of my complaints are curiously due to hardware limitations, which, for obvious reasons, cannot be blamed on the developers. *Retaliation* is easily the best RTS experience on PS, and I recommend it to any fan. ☺



As they did in the PC series, the battles can become very crowded and intense. Be sure to protect those ore trucks!



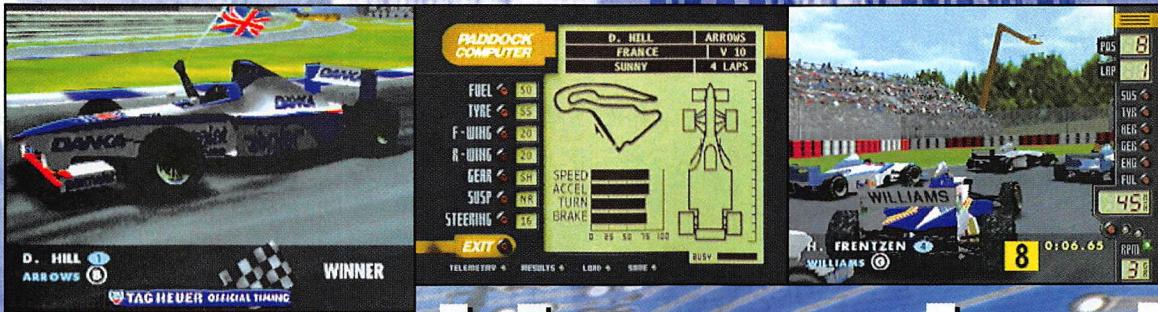
- IMPRESSIVE 2D ACHIEVEMENT ON WEAK 2D MACHINE
- COMES SURPRISINGLY CLOSE TO ITS PC COUNTERPART

- NEW MAPS AND CINEMAS ARE A WELCOMED ADDITION
- LIMITED FIELD OF PLAY & SLOWDOWN HURT EXPERIENCE

REPUBLIC SAYS...

RETALIATION ON PLAYSTATION MAY HAVE SOME WOES, BUT THE EFFORTS HERE ARE MORE THAN COMMENDABLE AND THE EXPERIENCE REMAINS SOLID AND FUN

B-



World grand prix

Authentic Formula 1 racing comes to the N64!

Obviously inspired by the verisimilitude of Psygnosis' excellent F-1 series, this racer from original "Dream Team" developers, Paradigm, strives to achieve a similar status on the N64. Unfortunately, this fairly ambitious attempt at recapturing that most cutting edge of motorsports is curtailed by some graphics and control problems.

Based around the 1997 F-1 season, *World Grand Prix* features eleven teams and its roster of drivers (though only 6 teams and 12 drivers are real). Big names are thankfully on tap, including current '98 points leader Mika Hakkinen with team McLaren, Schumacher with Ferrari, and many others. Seventeen courses are on hand and they mirror their real world counterparts favorably. And in keeping with the realism, official F-1 broadcasting overlays are used to help create the proper look and feel of a televised event. In these areas, Paradigm has done well.

The first sign of trouble comes when you make the first corner in the game; something is simply not right



with the steering feel in *World Grand Prix*. For one, the car doesn't quite feel connected to the road and you have none of that actual "tire on asphalt" sensation of a Psygnosis or UbiSoft game. Under hard braking, it feels as if the weight isn't being properly transferred to the front wheels and the tires never "bite" as they should. Also, the car seems to turn around an axis that is closer to the center of the vehicle than is natural. If you're not that anal, the control is ultimately serviceable, but it's far from stimulating or realistic.

Considering the difficulty of modeling real world tracks (which have little regard for polygon count), *WGP* does it as well as can be expected. Draw-in is generally distant, but occasional N64 murkiness in concert with a below 30 frame rate lends a slightly unrefined look to the action. This doesn't stop some courses from impressing with their complexity and scenery, however, nor does it detract from the quite good looking car models.

Thankfully, Paradigm gives you a lot to tinker with, including your car's aerodynamics, tires, suspension, and transmission along with a wealth of gameplay modes. Full season and single race options are available along with two player split screen and a ghost time trial. Still, for all its good intentions, the damning control and slightly lackluster graphics keep *WGP* from greatness. ■

Paradigm's F-1 attempt is commendable for its ambitious presentation... but it falters with inherent control foibles and a generally rough appearance.

- GOOD LOOKING CAR MODELS AND WEATHER EFFECTS
- PUTS FOCAL LICENSE TO GOOD USE

- SLIGHTLY STUNTED FRAME RATE
- CONTROLS ARE UNREALISTIC AND SOMEWHAT ANNOYING

REPUBLIC SAYS...

PARADIGM IS TO BE COMMENDED FOR ITS AMBITIOUS ATTEMPT AT RE-CREATING FORMULA 1, BUT INHERENT CONTROL AND GRAPHIC FOIBLES PULL THE TITLE DOWN.

C+



BANJO-KAZOOIE

DEVELOPER: RARE PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

Banjo Kazooie, in many respects, can and should be considered a perfect game. Unless you think it's too cute, you'll be hard pressed to find any fault with this title - little comes to mind that RARE didn't think of. Picking up where *Super Mario 64* left off, RARE have perfected exactly the type of game that the Nintendo 64 was designed to do, and in the process eliminated the dreaded fog that plagues the genre. From each level's structure and diversity to the placement of the enemies and hazards, never before have I roamed such tuned environments, bustling with life as if their inhabitants had dwelled there for years. The way the play mechanics unfold as you progress, via Bottles the mole (whose dialog with Kazooie is genuinely funny), is brilliantly executed, as are the situations where you utilize them. The entire affair is tied together so well, it's staggering to imagine how intensely the team at Rare must have clicked building it - you're almost always doing something, no matter where you are in the game.

From the moment I switched it on 'til the last hair on Gruntilda's hide was singed, I never once grew weary



with any aspect of the game - which, by the way, is massive in terms of size. An "A+" is probably in order, but in the hopes that somehow *Zelda* can top it, I'm dealing *Banjo Kazooie* an "A." Bravo, Rare. As long as games like this continue to appear, the Nintendo 64 will prevail, no matter what happens next. ⚡



DOMINION

DEVELOPER: ION STORM PUBLISHER: EIDOS

Perhaps it is not exactly befitting to mention, but I find it funny how just the other day, as I was perusing a very dusty issue of a popular PC gaming magazine, I noticed an ad for *Dominion*. I am certainly familiar with the idea of advertising early to generate hype and early interest, but this attempt at propaganda appeared over a year ago. Nonetheless, I just received a copy of the game for review on the very same day that every gaming outlet across the country did. Either Ion Storm was not willing enough to release an early version and suffer the consequences of countless negative reviews, or the product was so late that there was no time to wait for the press. After playing *Dominion* for several hours, the truth reared its ugly head.

I guess one should be able to ignore the fact that *Dominion*'s development cycle was a mess at best. Besides, Ion Storm is loaded with some of the most notable talent in the gaming industry and is surely capable



of facing any adversity with positive results. But, unfortunately, something has gone terribly wrong here. The game is unbalanced, the interface is very cumbersome, the missions are overly meticulous and uneventful, the AI is weak, the overly emphasized cinemas add nothing to the game, and the 95,000 frames of animation boasted on the back of the box do absolutely nothing to spruce up the game's bland visual presence. This game is a prime example of having high hopes shattered. Need I mention development costs? I think not.



CRIME KILLERS

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: INTERPLAY
Spanning futuristic urban streets and underground sections as an officer of the law bent on taking down gang activity, your objectives in *Crime Killer* place you in a car, bike, and jet-like vehicle equipped with a basic cannon and pacifier (an electronic scrambling device) used to destroy or disable any suspicious vehicles appearing on radar. Grounded in fast, manic driving combat that rivals some of the swiftest engines on the Playstation, the game is an exercise in elemental action and reflex, in which the simplicity of the missions demands quick level turnover; and, inexplicably, here we get the opposite: levels are frustratingly long and drawn out, sucking the life right out of the game. After a lengthy search and destroy mission is made laborious with far too many fleeing vehicles and small levels that are navigated in a seemingly perpetual loop, you are required to take out bombs and missiles set on timed detonations – an artificial inflation on the difficulty level that is uncalled for.



With enough lighting to illuminate a small town and a blistering 60 frames per second presentation, *Crime Killer* is indeed an attention grabber. But that promising first impression is cut down by the realization that the claustrophobic horizon is a black sheet, bearing down on you more and more each play as pedestrians crash into you out of the darkness - yet another example of abrasive design flaws. Wantonly destroying the surrounding traffic is a bad move, but it won't take long before you say enough is enough and either start decimating the entire area, or moving on to a better game. ☀

**MECH COMMANDER**

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: MICRO PROSE
Although this might scare the kids, *Mech Commander* is an isometric real-time strategy game that has no minerals to mine, no barracks to build, and no structures to upgrade. In fact, there's almost absolutely nothing to manage other than your troops on the map. Similar to *Myth*, or *Syndicate* for that matter, it's up to you to guide a small (or sometimes large) force through dangerous territory without the opportunity to build more troops.



The most striking thing about *Mech Commander* is the graphics. While everything is quite small, the amount of detail is staggering. Footprints are left in the ground as your units run past, the glow from weapons streaks across the terrain, metal shards fly from Mechs when they're hit, and smoke trails off their husks. And the animation... gorgeous. There's literally more animation found in *Mechwarrior* than any other game in history (over 100,000 frames), and it shows.

Like *Commandos*, another RTS reviewed in this issue, *MC* truly shows you don't need a 3D card to appreciate what kind of graphics PC games can display. And while the gameplay is simplistic in nature (like every other RTS), the missions are deep and fun to play. Excellent stuff.

**MASTER OF MONSTERS**

DEVELOPER: TOSHIBA EMI **PUBLISHER:** ASCI

Sometimes you really shouldn't update a classic, especially when the original game didn't set the world on fire. *Master of Monsters* is one of those games. The original Genesis/Mega Drive version was only mildly amusing. Back when it was first released there were very few strategy RPGs on the system, and *MOM* helped to fill the void. There were better games though, games like *Shining Force*, and *MOM* was quickly forgotten. Now PS owners can relive the (ahem) adventure in a full, not-so gloriously remixed version of *Master of Monsters*, subtitled *Disciples of Gaia*. The map graphics are almost identical to the 16-bit version, complete with horrible color schemes and stunted two-frame character animation. Battle scenes (that take way too long to load) have been retouched slightly, but the animation is so poor by today's standards, you'll probably just laugh. The interface is also marred by extremely lengthy (pointless?) loading. Ultimately, then, you might be better off with the Genesis version. And that's only if you dig clumsy, archaic strategy. *Kartia's* coming, *Shining Force 3* is out there, and both are far superior. If you're still interested in purchasing *MOM:DOG*, please don't pay more than 20 bucks. ☀



The empire is the commandant and his monster army.

**WARGAMES**

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: MGM INTERACTIVE STUDIOS

The 1983 blockbuster movie, *WarGames*, was nothing like this. It never portrayed mammoth rocket-wielding mechs stomping across global landscapes. I don't recall any tanks, helicopters, jets, destroyers, or giant turrets. It never depicted hackers infiltrating computer centers to acquire money and enemy intelligence. In fact, the game portrayed in the movie was merely a contemporary version of *Missile Command*. But that was 15 years ago.



Wargames

Interactive Studio's upcoming game, *WarGames*, is more complex in scope than most RTS games, yet it is traditionally styled. Combining the deep resource management of Westwood Studios' *Command and Conquer* series with the magnificent 3D landscapes of Bungie's *Myth*, it takes the best of both worlds and attempts to create a game that has everything. Although it comes close to being an excellent game, the result isn't everything it could have been.

As nice as the 3D engine is, it ends up being a stumbling block due to its inaccurate collision detection - units sometime get caught on buildings and obstacles, rendering them useless. And due to the nature of the environments, it can be painful to find the right angle when attempting to fight a heated battle. But even so, if intense combat and deep strategy played out across 3D terrain sounds intriguing, then such problems can easily be overlooked. ☀





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Whether it's baseball, golf, or football your looking for as we approach the last days of summer, companies like EA, Fox, Konami, and T&E are rolling out the software, with a brand-new generation of sports titles. Engines have been refined, polygons added and AI improved. So why all the "C's?" Read on...

PRO 18

developer: intelligent game publisher: psynopsis available: november



With *Pro 18*, Psynopsis and London developers Intelligent Games are attempting to create the most detailed and realistic golf simulation ever for both the PlayStation and PC. Reversing current trends, players in the game are not polygonal models, but high quality digitized images, keeping with the designers' goal of re-creating the look of a television broadcast. Also impressive are the courses, which benefit from incredibly accurate modeling based on extensive aerial surveys and precise GPS telemetry. This complexity of detail doesn't permit real time fly-bys, but it does create an unprecedented level of static visual realism. Also, a new kind of swing meter will provide excellent control, and a full roster of pro players will be available.



EXPERT POOL

developer: visual sciences publisher: psynopsis available: fall



Psynopsis has a pool game on the way? You betcha, and it's looking pretty good... for a pool game. Looking to expand on the incredibly realistic physics of *Virtual Pool 2*, Scottish developers Visual Sciences are adding highly detailed environments and characters to the mix, as well as 18 different rule sets for the player to tackle, including standard eight ball and more obscure versions, such as bottle pool and other regional variations. Twelve different real world environments, ranging from American and European pool halls to more seedy bar settings, will hopefully add flavor and variety to the inherent dryness exhibited in *VP2*. *Expert Pool* will also feature a license from respected pool table makers Kasson and input from the world's number one female pool player, Alison Fisher.



NCAA Football '99

developer/publisher: electronic arts available: fall

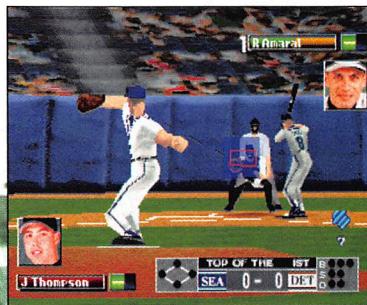


You have to give credit to EA for being the most consistent sports game developer on the planet. Their latest game, an update of the hot-selling *NCAA Football* series, uses their all-new polygonal engine (set to appear in *Madden '99* later this year). Unfortunately, the player detail is low, with very few polygons per player, resulting in stump-like hands and very angular appendages. On the plus side, the polygonal engine offers increased realism in player movements and, in-turn, sharper degrees of motion. While this is by no means a visually striking football game (*Gameday '99* is the one to watch, literally), abandoning sprites was a step in the right direction for EA. The controls are intuitive, and the analog stick works passing wonders if you can grow accustomed to it. In terms of ambiance, *NCAA Football '99* creates a believable feeling with wild crowd responses based on the state of the game. The ten different divisions from the I-A conferences are represented by all 112 teams, and *NCAA Football '99* goes one step further by including 80 of the all-time greatest teams in the history of college football. This is a solid, enjoyable college pigskin game with fine options and above average gameplay. Check it out.



Bottom of the 9th '99

developer/publisher: konami available: now



It's hard to take Konami's latest baseball game seriously... especially with *Triple Play*, *MLB*, and *All Star Baseball* around. *BOT9* just lacks polish - even the CG intro is short and poorly designed, perhaps due to the fact that an MLB license isn't in effect. But *BOT9* does have the MLBPA license, so there's plenty of pro stars (all of 'em), but no real teams or stadiums are present. Embellishments aside, all would be forgiven if the gameplay was spectacular, but, unfortunately, this is not the case. The typical batter/pitcher aiming cursor system is implemented well, but all of the other play-mechanics are woefully standard, and painfully adequate. The engine is merely decent, as are the voices and effects. Overall, there's not enough unique about *BOT9* to render it a worthwhile extension of the series.

Fox Sports Soccer

developer: gremlin publisher: fox sports available: now



Fox Sports first soccer release, *Fox Sports Soccer*, looks very similar to Gremlin's previous footy game, *Actual Sports Soccer*. But that's not necessarily a good thing. The player models are boxy and poorly shaded, and the engine often tends to fluctuate between frame rates. Accelerated, *FSS* pans and zooms around the stadium at adequate speeds, but filtering and mip-mapping effects do little to hide the poor player designs. *FSS* is fast and very controllable, but I crave the personality of *World Cup '98*. *FSS* players don't animate realistically when they're running, and thereby transform the gameplay into simple run and dodge tactics. In fact, pass it up to a middle fielder or forward and you

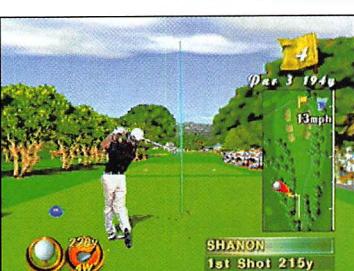
can pretty much fluke your way to the net, avoiding crowds of defenders like bullets in a shooter. *World Cup '98* is a far superior PC soccer game, so if you buy only one soccer title per year, make it that one.

Waialae Golf

developer: t&e soft publisher: nintendo available: now



What I like most about *Waialae Golf* is its simplicity. About the hardest part of the game is figuring out how to properly register your golfer, but once everything is set up, the single 3D course that follows can be played with very little initiation. Striking the ball requires the proverbial swing meter - tap the button once, and it ascends through an arc; tap again, and it stops for power, and then descends; tap a third time, and the resting point determines the quality of the shot. Not much new, but it works. If the passable play was nestled in a lovely course rather than these languid greens and fairways, then the game might actually deserve attention. But as the first US golf game on Nintendo 64, *WG* will still draw hapless sports fans looking for anything to fill the void. After an hour of play, the void will remain.



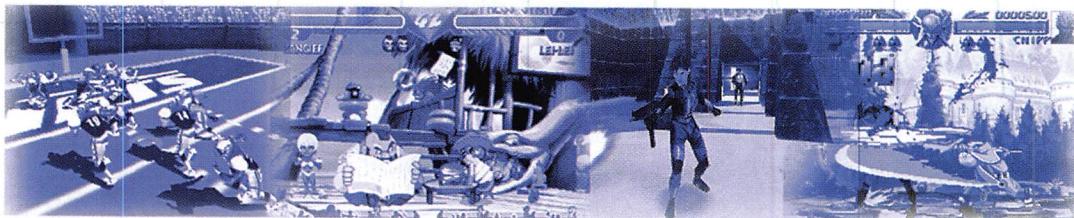
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gameday '99

By Brady Fletcher



What I like about *GameDay '99* - and this has always been the case with the series - is that when a player makes a crushing tackle, the brutal force is wildly convincing, invariably evoking delightful cringes from anyone witnessing the hit; you don't even have to be playing the game to appreciate the realism it exudes. As entertaining as it is to see a linebacker drop an unsuspecting wide receiver brave enough to dare his domain, the finesse moves can be just as rewarding: watching a clean block open up a hole in the defense for an agile running back to dart through is sweetly satisfying. Players react to your strategy accordingly, every play transpires logically, sometimes spontaneously, just as you would expect to see in any real football game.

In its early state, *GameDay '99* is being plagued by a sluggish and inconsistent framerate, yet despite this, the players still maintain their radiating realism - a testament to the massive potential of the final product. Because the players are a bit slow at the moment, it is difficult to judge if the game has an even shrewder AI than last year, but Sony claims their Authentic Football Intelligence will be the foundation to more formidable opponents, who disguise coverages, react to the offense with unprecedented skill, and basically utilize more realistic strategies - you can forget about illegal blocks and senseless play calling. But considering how deft the computer has been in the past, I can't fathom any drastic improvements being made.

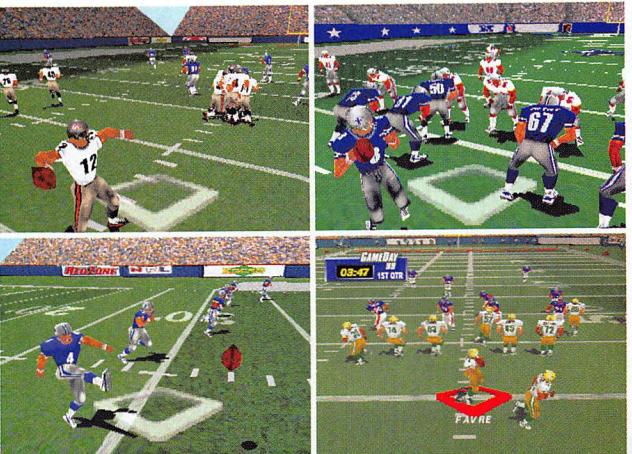
But even if the gameplay enhancements do end up being minimal, *GameDay '99* is receiving such a huge overhaul in its player models - their polygon counts are more than doubled - there is already enough reason to anticipate an entirely fresh *GameDay* experience. To help facilitate the uncharted atmosphere, meticulous care has also been taken to give added dimension to the already lifelike models - detailed shoulder and thigh pads, tucked jerseys that expose flexed biceps, and a wellspring of idle animations make the players demonstrably more appealing than the triangle inflicted bodies of last year's models.

The ambition behind *GameDay '99* is deeply evident and, as in every element of

the game, the developers are going for all they can to make it the quintessential football simulation - which is why it comes as no surprise that renowned sportscasters Dick Enberg and Phil Simms are calling the game. But here is a suggestion to 989 Studios: You have an awesome game of football in the works. With fine professionals like these, utilize them properly, and make sure we don't want to turn off the sound in the final version; this game deserves nothing but the best. *



The improvements made to the player models are invaluable. Over 350 polygons mold the players, each one motion captured from nine different NFL players.



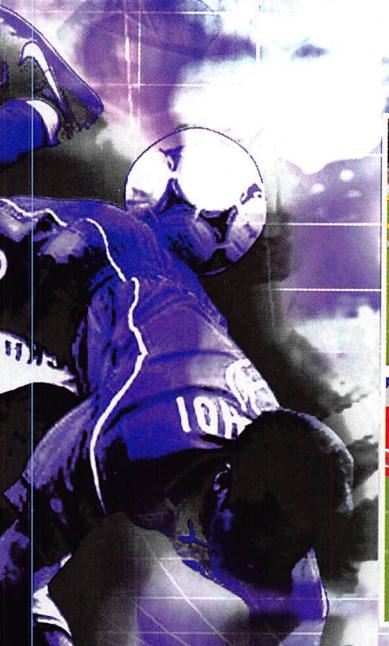


ISS Soccer '98

By Brady Frechter



n64 version



THERE IS SUCH AN INCREDIBLE DEPTH OF PLAY ON N64.
NO BETTER LOOKING SOCCER GAME ON THE CONSOLES.

REPUBLIC SONY

How can ISS '98 possibly improve upon the original?
Better animation, tighter control, swifter players, more stadiums, and deeper strategies is a good place to start.

Like in any great sports game, the defining moment in *International Superstar Soccer '98* on the Nintendo 64 takes place near the goal post. When a precision offensive attack is mounted, or the opponent knives through a defensive wall, what ensues is some of the most exciting, adrenaline packed sporting around. A mass of bodies will nearly always greet any scoring opportunity, and when an exchange of diving headers, bicycle kicks, and pinpoint passes culminates in an outrageous match of wit between the goalie and nearly every offensive body converged around the net, the end result – be it victory or defeat – is sensational. It is rare for a sports game to generate this level of infectious energy.

From the moment the game begins, *ISS '98* screams its superb presence. Konami has juiced this update to last year's version with more flash and style, and every time you play, something new will catch your eye – the animation seems to get better, every move seems even more realistic. If the gameplay were average, this would still be a fine soccer title. But the game plays with remarkable grace and precision, a marked improvement over the original *ISS*.

A typical score on the hardest setting will hover around the 2-1 mark, but the remarkable playability is a major reason taking on the formidable computer is such a blast.

Quite a lot has been added to enhance *ISS '98* over the original, making it the quintessential soccer title on the market; the game only noticeably wavers when the grating color commentary starts up – an unfortunate problem given the consummate play calling in the first *ISS*; but don't expect it to be any better on the Playstation. And don't expect the Playstation version to surpass *ISS '98* on N64 in any areas. While a competent and entertaining arcade style game, there is not nearly the level of excitement exhibited on the N64 version. And when the comparisons are taken off, the game still struggles to get off the ground. Little things detract from the game – the ball sounds like it's deflated, presentation is not finely polished, and there is not a great deal of depth to the strategies. But minor flaws are overshadowed by a fine level of motion capturing sequences and tight, intuitive play that is easy to pick up. Just don't make the mistake of playing the N64 version first. *

ps version



HERE IS A GAME MADE FOR SPORTS LOVERS, NOT JUST SOCCER FANS. NO SOCCER SIMULATION CAN COME CLOSE TO PUMPING THE CONSTANT VISCERAL RUSH OF ISS '98.

Playstation	Nintendo 64
B-	A-

by Bryn Williams

FULL CONTACT full contact sports

• developer iguana • publisher acclaim • available now

sports preview page 77



WWF Warzone

Complete wrestling mayhem as the Federation invades the home console once more! And that's the bottom line!

Surely we must have lost count of the sheer number of poor wrestling games out there in console-land, where so many tend to be uncontrollable or downright boring. Tune in to almost any WWF event and you can't help but enjoy the wild spectacle. Pillars of fire, blaring guitar riffs, guest celebs like Mike Tyson, mindless violence – it's all here. So why not harness this energy? Well, *WWF Warzone* has by featuring all the big names from the WWF (even ex-members like Bret Hart), every twisted WWF matchup (tag team, weapons battle, cage fight, etc.), and loud, spot-on commentary by Vince and "Good 'ole J.R." Best of all, there's a detailed create-your-own-wrestler mode. We brought to life some of the most outrageous human travesties ever seen: huge, fat sumo blokes with neck ties and pink underwear, and skinny girlie men with sunglasses and leather gloves. Let's just say it's a classic moment in video gaming when you can produce a

PlayStation version



Nintendo 64 version



wrestler this tragic and take the championship belt from the Undertaker in the tournament final.

The PlayStation version is slightly weaker than the N64 because of the obvious CD associated loading times and poorly rendered FMV sequences, but, over all, both versions enjoy good sound effects, excellent polygonal bruisers, cool environments, and high frame rates. Unlike most other titles, the control system works very well, and each wrestler has an abundance of moves, special techniques and secret holds, chokes and pins; it really is quite satisfying to choke out an opponent, scale the sides of the deadly cage, and dive bomb from high above onto his chin. *WWF* fans will love it regardless, but this could prove to be a quality wrestling game that changes other peoples minds (can I get a, "Hell yeah!?"), including mine, at least for a short while.

The custom wrestler mode allows you to alter almost every conceivable aspect, from the color of his boots, to the size of his belly. Included is a random generator button for instantly amusing players, but the real fun is doing it yourself!

Create your twisted WWF wrestler from scratch!

- SUPERB POLYGONAL WRESTLERS
- AWESOME CUSTOM CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT MODE

- PLAYSTATION VERSION SLIGHTLY INFERIOR TO N64
- IT'S STILL WRESTLING AT THE END OF THE DAY

REPUBLIC SAYS...

A NICE CHANGE FROM THE USUAL DRIVEL THAT LITTERS THE WRESTLING-GAME COMMUNITY. START CRUSHING YOUR PALS TODAY.

PlayStation	Nintendo 64
C+	B-

Football

By Dave Rees



Arcade competition of the pigskin variety

The bone-crunching, in-your-face gameplay of NFL Blitz comes home!

Arcade fans are surely familiar with *NFL Blitz*, but for console owners, Midway is preparing to bring the same hard-hitting experience home to the PC, PlayStation and N64. Although the PS and N64 conversions are sure to suffer from some graphic degradation and the 60 fps frame rate will likely drop, it appears that the developers are focusing on capturing the same abrasive gameplay that makes the game so much fun to play. The PC version, however, will support 3Dfx and should prove to be identical to the arcade game.

To fill the now high expectations of arcade to home ports, Midway will be adding some new features to the home versions. We spent time with *NFL Blitz*'s lead artist and animator, Sal DiVita, to rap about the upcoming multi-platform conversion.

What special features can we expect to see in the home versions of Blitz?

NFL Blitz on the PC will have network capabilities; you'll be capable of playing people over the internet and a LAN as well, and actually the home versions will be different than the arcade versions, in that they will have season play, which will allow you to take one team and play through an entire season with them. And also we're going to have a feature called create a play, where you can actually build your own plays up and try to use those to outwit your opponent. *Blitz* only has a few offensive plays and a few defensive plays, so this will give players a chance to try to figure out other ways of exploiting routes and patterns and try to get open.



They were all too slow and it just takes too long to get into them. Though we know there was a market for a lot of simulator games, we went with our gut on this one, and we decided to do a fast paced, fast action, hard hitting, no rules, no penalties type of game. And there is a market for that as well.

What sort of special challenges do sports titles present?

The special challenges are that you want to put a twist to them, something that makes them stand out from other sports games. For example, *NBA Jam* and *NBA Hangtime* stand out from other simulator basketball games by being fast action, high jumping, kind of like stuff you see in highlight reels all of the time... That's the same with *NFL Blitz* - there's always something spectacular happening in the game and that's what really makes it stand out from other sports games.

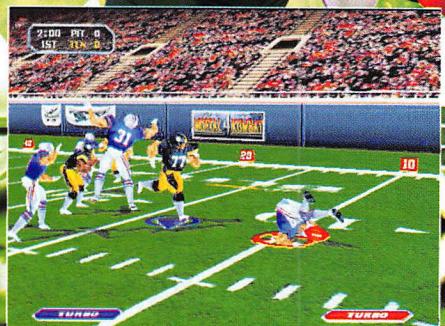
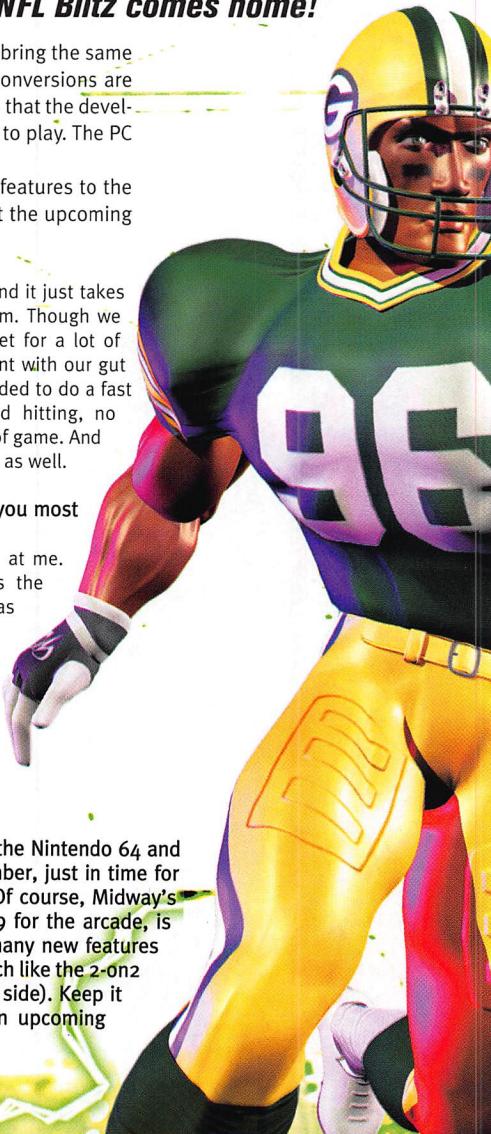
How do you know what makes a sports game stand out? What sort of research is involved?

Well, as far as research for any of our games, typically we ask game players what they want to see in games. But then we also have a gut feeling ourselves. For example, for *Blitz* we played every kind of football game that was out there and we thought, "you know, we don't like the way any of these games play."

What types of games influenced you most in developing Blitz?

Yeah, you know, your gonna laugh at me. The game that has influenced us the most as far as sports video games has been *Mattel Intellivision Football*. [I happen to be a huge Intellivision fan, so this inspired me to shout "YES!" in a big way.] Isn't that a great game? It's simple, it's just fundamentally fun, and there's not a lot of delays. It's just a great game.

NFL Blitz will be released for PC, the Nintendo 64 and the Sony PlayStation this September, just in time for this year's NFL football season. Of course, Midway's next big football project, *Blitz '99* for the arcade, is well underway and will include many new features such as support for 4-players, much like the 2-on-2 play of *NBA Jam* (two players per side). Keep it here for an all-out preview in an upcoming issue.





What better spokesperson could there be for *NFL Blitz* than Kordell Stewart? A player recognized for his wide-open style, flashy footwork and unpredictability, his nickname, Slash, says it all. Just when you think he's going to go for the long bomb, he reverses direction and jets down the field for twenty yards. As the defense attempts to adjust to his fancy footwork, he takes to the air and throws a forty-yard touchdown pass with as much confidence and accuracy as John Elway on a good day. How do you defend against such a style? Expect the unexpected, and then hope that you guessed correctly.

Marrying Slash's versatility with *NFL Blitz* was a natural choice for Midway. Kordell's style is exactly what *Blitz* is all about: referees are nonexistent, seven players on a team, plenty of spiffy moves, and in-your-face gameplay that focuses on fun rather than detailed statistics and simulation.

Midway is planning a huge marketing campaign for *NFL Blitz* when it hits both the PlayStation and N64 consoles this fall, and we were fortunate enough to be invited to the set of an upcoming commercial to talk to Slash about his role as an NFL quarterback as well as a gameplayer.

Interview with Pittsburgh Steeler's QB Kordell Stewart

What are your goals as an athlete in the NFL?

Well, it's been a wonderful career so far. As a professional athlete, I plan to achieve all of the goals that I can possibly achieve. And also, everything [the Steelers] can achieve collectively as a team. That is just the kind of person I am. To basically go out there and just focus on what I'm working for... I just want to finish successfully as a quarterback in this league, and just have fun and enjoy myself while doing it.

What about the various roles you have had with the Steelers? How do you think that has changed the team?

When I was primarily a wide receiver, we obviously had some success team-wise, but when I had the opportunity to be the starting quarterback of the team, I obviously knew that I was going to do some great things with the team and for the team. As far as reaction from the other players, there was nothing but good reactions because the things they got from me on the field were good work ethics. When I was playing wide receiver, I was playing a position I never played before, but to finally have the opportunity to do what I wanted to do - that position which was quarterback - you couldn't do nothing but sit back and say, "let's just watch the man play." That was my mentality. I knew in my heart I could do it, it was just a matter of time. Everything just took off from there, the guys just never had any problems, and they would say, "man, we gotta get you in and let you do your thing." It was always like, "we know you can do it man, we just want you to go in there and relax and have fun..." And that's exactly what I did.

Do you miss being wide receiver at all?

Nooooo! That was my first year ever doing that, and to not have the opportunity to play QB then was more hurting to me because I knew that I could get it done, but it was also only fair to me to throw me in there to

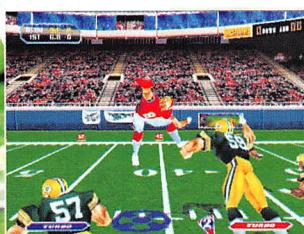
the wolves and make me learn what was going on. I think that it helped me more than hurt me.

How did you get involved with Midway and Blitz?

You know, Midway having the game Blitz and, with all of the things that they're trying to get done on this game, obviously my character and my football name, which is Slash, caused them to want me to be involved in promoting this game. You look at a game that involves no referees, seven guys on the field, first and thirty, anything goes... You take a player like myself with the character I have and the things that I have done in the past and apply it to this game, and it matches up very well. You know, wide receiver, running back, quarter back... obviously you could say that I will get the kids' attention and the fans' attention and be a great spokesperson, and I think it is going to work out wonderfully. I think for them to ask me is both an honor and a privilege to be the spokesperson, and hopefully we can take it very far - as far as we are trying to.

Who's your toughest opponent?

Myself. I'm my own worst enemy. If I go out one day and throw for 350 yards, and the next week, I throw for 100 yards, and the next week I throw for three interceptions, then the following week I fumble a few snaps, you know, there's no consistency at all. And if I'm on my game, the sky is the limit for me. And if I go with that approach I think I'll be fine throughout my career. But once I'm out there and I'm not sure, I'm lackadaisical, I'm not clear, the focus is not there, the guy that wanted my autograph is calling me a jerk... Those types of things can cause me to be my own enemy. I'm my own worst critic; I criticize every little thing I do, and it doesn't matter how good it is, it always can be done better.

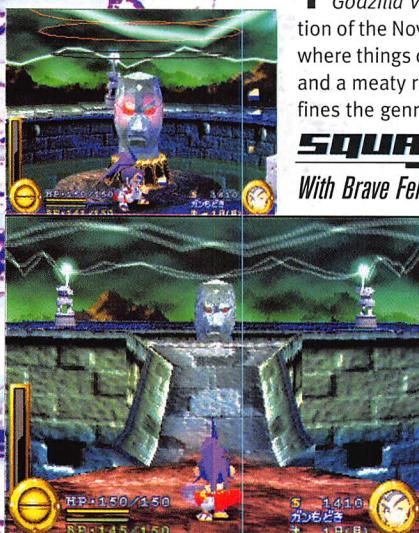


WORLD REPUBLIC

Things continue to get hotter on the Japanese gaming scene, as this month we actually received our *Godzilla VMS* (Virtual Memory System)! It's a little piece of Dreamcast for us to hold in anticipation of the November 20 launch in Japan. Of course, 32-bit gaming is still on center stage, and it is here where things continue to evolve in splendid fashion. This month we have our first taste of *Brave Fencer* and a meaty review of *Dracula X* for the Saturn, as well as the first shooter from Treasure, which redefines the genre as we know it. Enough introductions - *The World Republic* awaits your perusal!

SQUARESOFT READY FOR ACTION

With Brave Fencer Musashiden, will Square raise the bar, or lower expectations?



Featuring character designs by Tetsuya Nomura of *FF7* and *Parasite Eve* fame along with the Square seal of justice, it's hard not to get excited about *Brave Fencer Musashiden*. I've often said during frequent bouts of wishful thinking that if Square ever made a 3D action/platformer, it would set new standards, and now here we are on the brink of just that. However, having played the first two levels of *Brave Fencer* I must be honest and say that I am less than thoroughly elated at this point. Not only does the engine not impress me all that much compared to the likes of *Medievil's*, but the flat shaded enemies leave much to be desired. Of course I'll not judge the game based on two levels of what I'm sure will be an epic adventure, but I am a bit concerned. If *Brave Fencer* carried any other label, I'd likely be singing a different tune, but like any standard setting company, Square must continually thrill me to the core of my being for me to continue to hold them in as high a regard as I do based on the *FF* series, *Chrono Trigger*, and *Secret of Mana*. The day of reckoning is approaching as *Brave Fencer* comes out in Japan just days after we close this issue. I'll meet you back here in October *World Republic* with a full appraisal of what should be one of the year's most epic titles... I hope. ♫

• developer/publisher **squaresoft** • available now

BRAVE FENCER



(A) Release the imprisoned and they will aid you on your journey (B&C) By launching your weapon you can suck spells out of the enemy forces.

NOTABLE RELEASE DATES

Here's a list of games from which to choose your next batch of imports. If it's not on the list, chances are it's either Pachinko, Horse racing, or worse...

PLAYSTATION

AUGUST 6

Bio Hazard Dual Shock Capcom

Bio Hazard 2 Dual Shock Capcom

Trap Gunner Adus

Dragon Seeds Jaleco

Gun Baru Namco

Bomberman Fantasy Race Hudson

AUGUST 13

Echo Night From Software

AUGUST 27

The King of Fighters Kyo SNK

Astronoka Enix

Dancing Blade Konami

SOMETIME IN AUGUST

Puzzle Bobble 4 Tetra

Abarabahn Takara

SD Gundam G Generation Bandai

SATURN

AUGUST 6

Astra Super Stars Sun Soft

Lupin the Third Asmik Ace Entertainment

Guardian Force Success

Wachenroader Sega

Pro Baseball Greatest Nine '98 Sega

AUGUST 27

Black/Matrix NEC

Slayers Royal 2 ESP

NINTENDO 64

AUGUST 1

Pokemon Stadium Nintendo

AUGUST 7

64 Tramp Collection Bottom Up

SOMETIME IN AUGUST

Nintama Rantaro Culture Brain



(A) Epic boss encounters almost make up for the mundane and repetitive level baddies (B) Cool camera sweeps swing and pan as each level gets underway. (C&D) The levels vary greatly in detail from simple and rather plain polygonal structures to complex metallic corridors.

HUDSON'S PUT THE EARTH IN PERIL!

From the ashes of NEC's PC Engine comes the first overhead shooter for the Nintendo 64

Hudson made 8-bit shooter history when they introduced *Gunned* for the PC Engine way back in 1990. Followed in the US by *Star Soldier*, its TurboGrafx hallmark, it spawned a sequel (*Super Star Soldier*) and left fond memories in its wake. Now, some eight years later, Hudson's nearly identical assault, *Star Soldier: Vanishing Earth*, lands in our laps, smack dab in the middle of the era of 3D shooting. The question is, can the same formula, with some added camera sweeps and cinematic encounters in tow, hold water in 1998. I think the answer depends on what you're gaming preferences are. If you're akin to picking up a Genesis or SNES controller once in awhile for a quick spin through old school gaming, *Vanishing Earth* will likely make your trigger finger content. The game plays just like the old model, except now you can deflect enemy fire when the action gets to fraught with danger. The new spin is only marginally cheap, though, as it lasts only seconds and takes a few to regenerate. You can't simply spin through the game (at least in the Normal or Master modes). My sister could whoop *Vanishing Earth* on Easy, so I don't recommend ever activating it at all, unless you're a sissy, or first time gamer. Graphically, Hudson's done a nice job of converting *Star Soldier*'s traditionally 2D scenery into layered polygonal structures. Although some of the textures seem a bit simplistic, overall the levels look quite enticing. The enemies, however, seem a bit cheaply modeled to me. While some fade into view smoothly, utilizing transparency and clever shading, they are small and travel in traditional waves for the most part. I'd like to have seen more large polygonal enemies within the levels, similar to the bosses, which have made an appropriate transition to the polygonal world. As expected, the music in *Vanishing Earth* is excellent, in fact, it's largely responsible for the game's addictive nature. I've played through more than a few times and I'm still tapping along with the rhythm.



(G) This huge fan blade is blasted from your path regardless of how powered up your shots are (E). One of the larger mid level enemies. (F) The first boss encounter. He's big, he's steel and you've seen him in at least 10 other games.



these furry little creatures as they try to surround you. When this game was first released at the end of the PC Engine's life, it was an "A" title. Lately, though, with games like *Lunar: Silver Star Story* showing how updates should be done, *Saturn Linda 3* deserves nothing more than this... B-



• developer/publisher hudson • available now

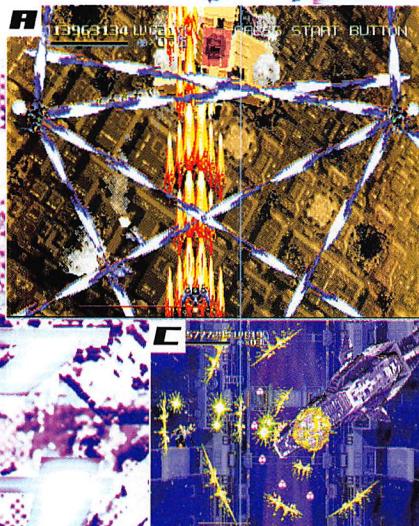
STAR SOLDIER



On the flip side of the coin, if you've had all you take of overhead shooters, besides nostalgia, there's nothing overly exciting here to draw you back, so you may want to pass unless you collect non-US released imports; I seriously doubt this one will make its way stateside. As complex as some games are these days, it's nice to just kick it once in a while and simply shoot, but is it worth the hefty price of an import? In SSVE's case, probably not. *

Republic says - C





(A) Enemies in Silvergun attack with ferocious power. (B) Don't get caught between the machine's impenetrable laser barrier like we did (C) Saturn-only bosses like this giant fish boss add to the excitement. (D) What other shooter can offer this kind of blasting madness?

• developer/publisher **treasure** • available now

RADIANT SILVERGUN

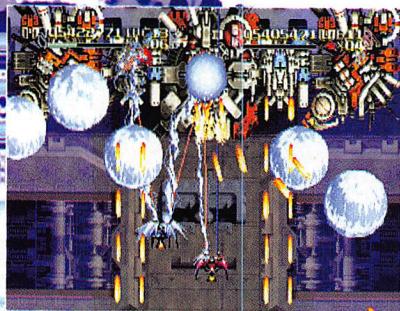


Treasure has proven, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that they are game development masters. *Gunstar Heroes* is possibly the best side-scrolling action platformer ever devised. *Dynamite Headdy* and *Alien Soldier*? Brutally creative single player experiences. *Guardian Heroes* is one of my "all-time" games with its unbelievable control, flawless collisions, and gorgeous character design. *Mischief Makers* and *Silhouette Mirage* had hyper-original play-mechanics and great aesthetics. After all these character-driven classics, though, I've always wondered what a 32-bit Treasure shooter might be like. Well, they've done it: Just like every other genre defining title Treasure creates, *Radiant Silvergun* has quickly taken the crown as best shooter on any gaming platform.

RADIANT STORY UNFOLDS...

In July of 2520, an artifact is excavated from an ancient meteor. The artifact is similar to the Robonoid Creation Type Product ID 00104 (a.k.a. Creator). Earth's scientific military division successfully restores the memory chip built into the Robonoid,

and as the analysis begins, a strange rock-like entity found near the excavation site suddenly activates itself, emitting a giant flash of light that destroys the entire research facility. Strange flying objects materialize all over the planet and commence a sweeping wave of indiscriminate termination. Earth's last hope lies in the space cruiser Tetora, which orbits the sun with five crew members and a Robonoid. They race back from their long trip to launch a counter attack and discover the true intentions of the artifact and alien Robonoid.



SHOT TYPE 1



VULCAN

The Vulcan is a generic, straight ahead attack weapon. Like most standard issue forward weapons, it's very powerful. As it levels-up, you'll be able to concentrate firepower and eliminate enemies very quickly. Also, beginning with Level 4, an extra side shot is added, which widens the shot range slightly.

SHOT TYPE 2



SPREAD

Fired off to the side, the blue Spread shots travel at 67.5 degrees. Each shot counts as four times the power of the Vulcan, making it an extremely valuable weapon and a favorite boss-killer. Every five levels the shot speed and power increases, and it has a direct influence on the effect of the Wide shot and Marker Homing.

SHOT TYPE 3



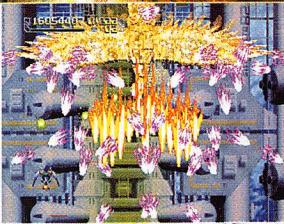
HOMING

While not as powerful as the Vulcan, the Homing Type offers perfect searching capabilities. The shots will become stronger as you level up. It can be very effective when fighting bosses, as it makes contact no matter where you may be on screen. Its power level influences the angular nature of the Homing Plasma.

A NEW GAMEPLAY STANDARD...

According to Treasure, these are the major set-backs with shooters of late: a) Selecting weapons is slow and cumbersome. b) There are too many power-up items (especially speed). c) Games don't reflect the player's skill level. d) Power-ups don't have much strategy involved in using them. In *Radiant Silvergun*, Treasure tackles these problems with completely revised gameplay. For starters, all available weapons come equipped on your ship at the beginning of the game. There are no weapon power upgrades, and no additional weapon power-ups.

Instead, with each successive play through the game you'll build your firepower by raising the level of each weapon through the destruction of enemies. When you run out of ships and continues, you can save your progress and restart the game with exactly the same weapon levels and score fully intact. The reason for this? After each section of a level you're given a Kills percentage rating. When you first begin to play and your weapons are at a lower level, it's oftentimes impossible to receive a perfect 100% score. By skillfully playing through the game, dozens of times, you'll eventually have the weapon power to earn a perfect score on each level, which in turn yields lives and the all-important extra continues you need to complete the game. This is a brilliant system and design that only Treasure (it seems) is capable of successfully raising from concept to reality. Who would have thought that a dedicated level system could work?

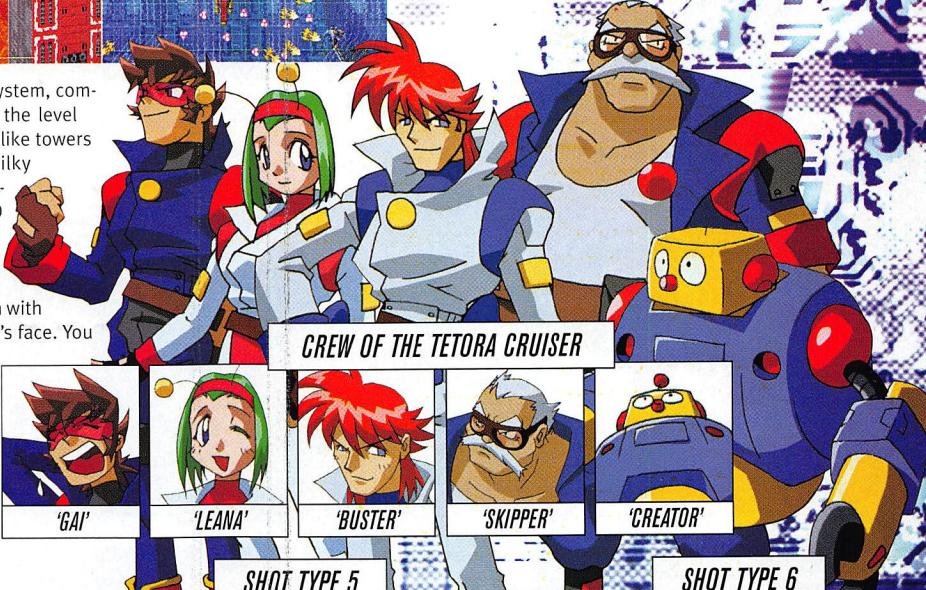


(E) Final encounters don't get better than this! **(F)** Mechanized turtle boss attacks. **(G)** The coin-op final boss is still just halfway through. **(H)** Crazy dodging is required, though thankfully, the bullets are fairly slow moving.



With the cleanest looking 3D you'll ever see on the system, complimented by equal portions of gorgeous 2D artwork, the level graphics explode with stunning polygonal 3D elements like towers and sprawling cityscapes, while mind numbing silky smooth Mode 7-type effects (accomplished via the powerful VDP 2 chip) rotate and scale beautifully drawn 2D backgrounds from screen to screen. Transparent clouds roll by at blazing speeds, wondrously deep parallax and line scrolling shift giant metallic structures, and jaw-dropping bosses and their weapons load the screen with enough chaos to bring a manic smile to any true gamer's face. You need to see this game in motion. Hitoshi Sakimoto's intense symphonic soundtrack is up to par with the ferocious visuals, fueling each level with epic compositions at all the appropriate moments. *Radiant Silvergun* is hard-core, genuinely fun every time, and the gameplay sets a standard that evolves the genre. Shooter fans must buy this game and see why treasure can't be stopped. ♫

Republic says - A



CREW OF THE TETORA CRUISER

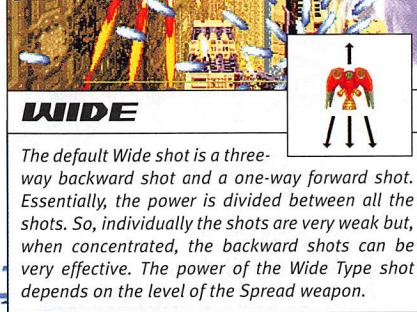


SHOT TYPE 4



WIDE

The default Wide shot is a three-way backward shot and a one-way forward shot. Essentially, the power is divided between all the shots. So, individually the shots are very weak but, when concentrated, the backward shots can be very effective. The power of the Wide Type shot depends on the level of the Spread weapon.

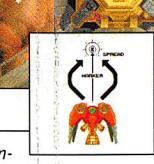


SHOT TYPE 5

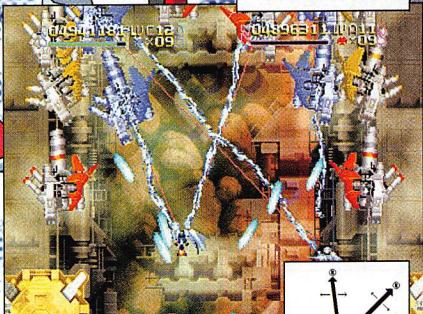


MARKER

The Marker Homing shot is similar to the lock-on weapon of *Layer Section* (*Raystorm*). The moment you press the button, a circular formation of markers is released. Once enemies have been marked, a set of thin laser will be launched to the target. The Spread weapon affects its range and power.

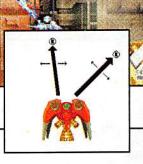


SHOT TYPE 6



PLASMA

This is a unique homing weapon. At first, two thin tracer beams are released, sweeping the area in front of the Silvergun. Once the tracers locate targets, a plasma/electrical blast will lock on and fry the enemy until the Silvergun moves too far out of position. The tracer range increases by 20° with every five levels of Homing.



• developer/publisher konami • available now
DRACULA X



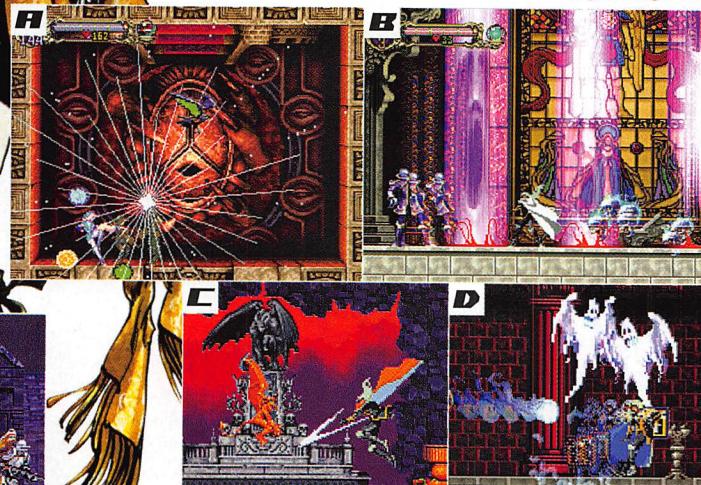
The spirit of the series lives on despite being stripped of the PlayStation's glory

It is extremely rare for a video game to play on my emotions, but *Dracula X* on the PlayStation does. One of the greatest videogaming experiences of my lifetime, this game is such a wonder to play that it creates a problem for me as I review the Saturn version. Do I praise the fact that the newest *Dracula X* is one of the most enjoyable Saturn experiences in the past year, a marvelous addition to the *Castlevania* series, or do I tell you it left me disappointed and telling myself I'll never play it again?

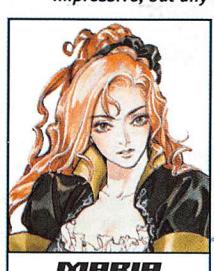
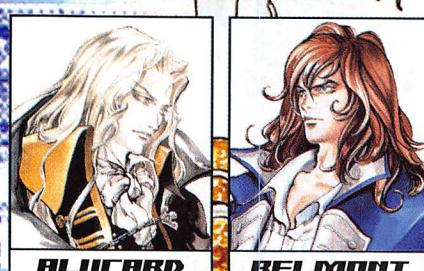
It may sound like a huge contradiction to want to warmly praise a game and equally root out its faults, but *Dracula X* deserves both - praise as a sole Saturn title, criticism as an inept and forgettable translation from the PlayStation. The heart of *Dracula X* has made it onto the Saturn, but the scars from its transplant are deep: transparencies and stupendous lighting effects that embellished the scenery and gave the enemies indelible death sequences have been turned into somewhat drab, colorless blotches, the crisp guttural screams have lost some impact and, in what is the most peculiar annoyance, the game slows down considerably and loads in areas where the PlayStation barely paused. If the prospect of playing Maria and Richter is drawing you toward this import purchase, understand that the castle has been crafted around the makeup of Alucard, and these two characters play as an afterthought, awkwardly out of place roaming the castle without powerups and any need for exploration. Two new levels (designed by the Saturn team, not the PS team), remixed music, and new items and weapons are also a tempting draw for *Castlevania* enthusiasts, but the game has been stripped of so many critical aspects, the PlayStation version is all you need.

But without the PlayStation version to base criticisms on, *Dracula X* on Saturn will involve you in a richly entertaining, thoroughly absorbing adventure. After awhile, I was once again experiencing the magic I first felt on the PlayStation as I began to lose myself in the glorious art, wonderfully creative enemies and ravishing music, in that moment forgetting that a better version exists. *

Republic says - B+



(A) Maria Renard is now playable, and here serves as a boss encounter (B) The Saturn does a fine job re-creating this scene (C&D) The new hidden garden and haunted prison are nothing impressive, but any ardent fan will surely be tempted to see them



LANGRISSE V by Messiah

Langrisser is one of those rare games that has appeared on almost every modern 16 and 32-bit console system, and there's a reason for this - it's a great strategy series. Well, it was until *Langrisser IV*, where they messed with the battle order, taking the choice out of your hands. I had high hopes that *Langrisser V*, the very last game in the series, would ignore the previous installment and return to us the gameplay lost in IV, and with it return the strategy these games were once so



famous for. Ok, fine, we got screwed. Despite the much improved graphics, *Langrisser V* features no changes in game-play and, unfortunately, can only be summed up as a disappointment. ☹ C-

SOCER RPG by Enix

Finally, my prayers have been answered! After years of exploring dungeons, battling huge demonic beasts, and saving worlds from certain destruction, my secret RPG desire has been realized - managing a soccer team. Hold on though, Enix's latest game really isn't that bad. You travel the world looking for new soccer players, and "battle" on the field. The graphics are very polished, very similar to *FFVII*, and there's tons of places to explore. I don't know, the game is quirky, and it's certainly not the kind of title I would expect from Enix, but it is fun in a silly type of way. Traditional RPG players will certainly want to hold off for *Star Ocean: The Second Story*, though. ☹ B-



• developer/publisher **capcom** • available now

POCKET FIGHTER



They may be smaller, but they pack the same entertaining punch of their brethren!



Pocket Fighter sees Capcom taking a more "fun" approach to the fighting genre. This time they have simplified the control system, constructed 12 super-deformed versions of their most popular characters, and tweaked the gameplay so as to make it accessible to even the biggest fighting virgins. Novices may be able to enjoy the cuteness and laugh at the wackiness, but skilled players will recognize that Capcom have catered to all levels of engagement. Pulling off aerial combos, supers and unblockables are all possible, providing you have the know-how, therefore leading to some really intense rounds of fighting.

The look and feel of the game is downright cute/polished joy, with the animation being exceptionally close to that of the arcade machine and including the trademark features such as Flash combos, power gems, orbs and taunts. The PS version has the usual Arcade Battle, Free Battle and Option modes, as well as a few nice extras. These are the Running Battle mode (ala Tekken 2 & 3), and the rather strange Edit Fighter mode. This enables you to undergo a "psychological" test conducted by Tabassa (from Capcom's Japanese game, Warzard). By answering questions, you create a custom fighter that is matched to the responses you give. They can then be fought against, or saved and then challenged by another custom fighter.

The control system allows the simple Flash combos (e.g. punch, kick, kick, punch), to be performed. Each character has multiple Flash combos, each of which animate differently. For example, Zangief performs a Cossack dance, turns into a lumberjack, and then grabs the opponent, sits down at a dining-table and gets enraged when they disturb his lunch. It is for this reason that I enjoy *Pocket Fighter* so much. Any game that retains the playability and fluidity of its predecessors, while being a stonking good laugh as well, has to be a winner. ☺

POCKET FIGHTER ON SATURN

So what are the differences between the Saturn 4meg version and the PlayStation? The answer is very little. Although the 4meg cart provides some extra frames of animation (probably making the graphical aspect arcade perfect), it does not dramatically improve load times and overall playability. That, of course, is not really a problem, as the game is such a corker in the first place. Generally, though, Saturn owners tend to enjoy much superior 2D Capcom games to their PlayStation owning counterparts, with Street Fighter Zero 2 Dash being the most noticeable. This is a minor quibble, and the Saturn version is still a splendid game and comes highly recommended. Think about this instead. What would a PlayStation version of Vampire Savior play like? Enough said.



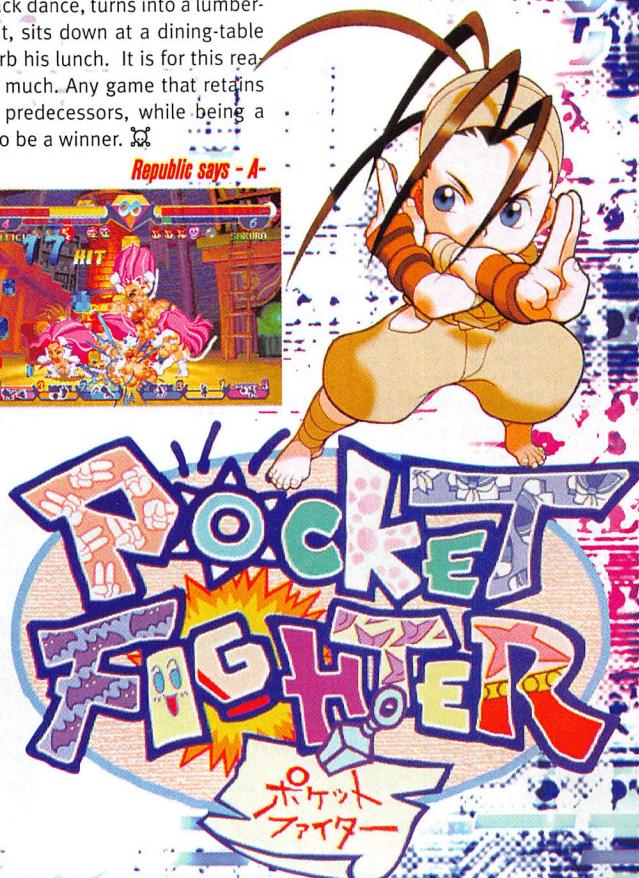
(A) Rain storm! Gouki, in typically fine form, finishes with an air hurricane



(B) Chun Li dons Jill Valentine's S.T.A.R.S. outfit to combat an out-of-control Lei Lei as Master Vega skates on in the background.



(C) Ken unleashes his donkey attack against three well-oiled gentlemen summoned by bunny girl, Sakura.



• developer/publisher **from software** • available now

SHADOW TOWER



A place in which fear dwells and blood runs cold, the Shadow Tower is darkly inviting...



From beginning to end, From Software's *Shadow Tower* immerses you in a subterranean dungeon filled with a collection of sights and sounds that defy the meaning of the word "bizarre." Compared to the peerless *King's Field* series, it has a visual presence that is far darker and more eerie. Picture a soot-filled, dusky labyrinth crawling with legions of adversaries: burping corpses hang from the ceiling dripping gastric juices on whatever passes below, giant heads slide across a damp stone floor and breathe a deadly greenish-yellow cloud of halitosis, hopping venusian traps hop around like bunnies, and long-stemmed eyeballs fire burning lasers at your feet. But it's not always what you see that sends chills up your spine.

Without any background music, *Shadow Tower* also focuses on aural ambience. Along with the ever present echoes of your footsteps, there is just enough aural stimulation to maintain an eerie setting: drips, scratches, crumbles, and pasty thuds of human corpses falling into a spike ridden pit; a



hideous scream emanates from a wall just in front of you; demented laughter, strange murmurs, and high pitched giggles echo through the hallways.

While *Shadow Tower* is initially progressive in its artistic impression, it fails to deliver when it comes to lasting value. The action is still very lethargic and the engine slows down severely in crowded areas. And even though the game includes an arena battle mode, and loads of statistics to track and items to find, it loses its appeal far too early. This one falls short of my expectations.

Republic says - C+

• developer/publisher **snk** • available now

REAL BOUT SPECIAL



SNK's first original PlayStation title enters the world kicking and screaming

DARK MESSIAH by Atlus

"All you can do is to run away and keep running." Broken English aside, I couldn't have summed up *Dark Messiah* any better than its in-game tagline if I tried. *Dark Messiah* is a game about emotion, and like *Eo and Clock Tower* before it, Atlus' new dungeon title is based on fear and anticipation. You play the part of a schoolgirl lost in the underground shelters deep beneath Tokyo after a horrible subway accident, stalked by a monster that wants nothing more than to see you dead.



You've got to cautiously wander the tunnels, talk to the vagrants you find there, and try to find help. *Dark Messiah* accomplishes on what it set out to do - deliver a truly suspenseful experience. The graphics aren't the greatest, but the gameplay is there, along with the best Dual Shock "feeling" you'll ever have. I had a blast. A-

Welcome back to the huge, varied, roundhouse and uppercut filled world of *Real Bout*. This time around, Neo Geo freaks can enjoy an extremely competent and playable version of *Real Bout Special*, sub-titled *Dominated Mind*. Favorites like the slapping fat man Cheng, mighty morphing Tung Fu Ru, fan favorite Blue Mary, and Power Waving Geese have returned. The package is introduced by a cool, high-quality (in terms of video) anime short, and the attract screens are stylish in that unique, slightly cheesy SNK way. Most impressive of all, however, is the animation quality. While noticeably lacking frames when compared to the previous RAM cart enhanced Saturn *Real Bout*, the overall quantity of animation is impressive nonetheless. Sadly, the voices are low quality again, just like past Neo Geo titles on the PS. Still, new characters like Alfred, the lightning fast pilot, and extra modes like survival challenge really enhance this game. Again, though, it must be stressed



that this is more of a cult fighter than anything else; it's not quite as initially appealing as a Capcom 2D fighter. Serious fighting fans will still find that there is a lot of technique in *Real Bout Special*, but unfortunately there's generally less cohesiveness between moves within chains and combos. PlayStation owners who are serious fans of the *Fatal Fury* and *K.O.F.* games should consider *RBS* an instant purchase.

Republic says - C+



(A) Terry Bogard brings the familiar Power Geyser "POW" attack to the fray. Most FF fans will have the moves nailed pretty quickly.

CHORO Q MARINE

The Japanese obsession with all things super-deformed continues with the latest in the *Choro Q* series, *Choro Q Marine*. Following a trend started with *CQ Jet*, this squashed madness set on the high seas continues to take the series where no squashed vehicle has been before. Featuring a huge assortment of watercraft that range from sailboats and luxury liners to subs and oil tankers, *CQM* deforms every seafaring vessel imaginable. You'll even get to control fish and whales.



• developer/publisher takara • available now

CHORO Q MARINE



Super-deformed watercraft take to the high seas in Takara's latest Choro Q



Gameplay modes include the standard race against computer opponents and a set of one player mission levels, in which you must meet specific objectives. Usually, you have to collect or destroy a number of targets within an allotted time, and complete other simple tasks.

It's unfortunate, however, that the game has failings in two critical areas: control and graphics. There's a real lack of precision in the control, with most boats' sluggish responses proving very unrewarding. And quicker handling craft feel darty and nervous, with a happy medium nowhere to be found. Control can be tamed, but it never feels "good." Then there's the game's engine, a rather sordid looking affair with bad z-buffering and less than stellar frame rate, which renders everything sloppily. It looks rough, which often saps whatever enjoyment may be had from running these cute little boats around.

Republic says - C



• developer/publisher sega • available now

GALAXY FORCE II



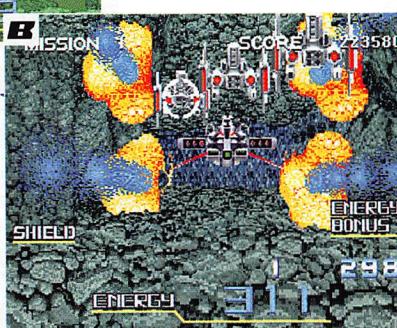
Sega Ages continue to deliver the classics! Now you can have at Galaxy Force II without the R-360!

Can't get enough of that old style Sega shooting action? Or perhaps you just wanna' relive the buzz you got the first time you took a spin in an R-360. Either way, for the mere price of an import SS game you can enjoy a perfect version of the arcade classic *Galaxy Force II*. Back in the day, this shooter was a technical wonder with its seemingly super fast scaling sprite engine and hot burnin' voice. Nowadays, however, it's almost hard to believe that, at one time, we saw this as majestic. The game seems ultra choppy to us now, and those young'ns who'd never seen it before just thought we were all nuts when we got so excited about it. Personally, I can't pass up any of these *Sega Ages*-discs and now,



more than ever, want versions of *Outrunners*, *Axe Battler*, and *Moonwalker* to round out my collection. With the news that Sega of Japan (applause) intends to support the Saturn with up to 100 more new games well in to the life of the Dreamcast, my wishes may yet come true.

Republic says - C+



(A) Gary's gone caption crazy! All I can say about this shot is that Miracle Grow must have been used on this planet. (B) The tunnel of love? Sprite-tastic delights? Hey, it's a classic!



CRISIS BEAT

by Bandai

Here is the latest action title featuring the premise of *Titanic*, *Under Siege 2*, and *Speed 2* all combined into a *Dynamite Deka* meets *Fighting Force 3D* beat 'em up. The heroes du jour are Eiji Garland, street fighting NYPD detective, Julia Jefferson (J.J.), high-kicking Supermodel, Keneth Kirova, Russian secret agent, and Yan Haint Feisus, a young college student. Their 3D models are a little rough around the edges (and seams), but I really like Bandai's character design and art style. The gameplay is pretty tight - much faster and more intuitive than *Fighting Force* - and there are satisfying numbers of crushing, juggling combos with each character. There's plenty of enemies, like wrestlers, machine gunners, flame throwers, and ninjas, many bosses, as well as two completely unique routes available to each set of characters. The two-player mode, pairing Eiji and J.J. or Keneth and Yan Haint, is just the icing on the proverbial beat 'em up cake.

Crisis Beat is weak in two departments: It loads too frequently between sections, and it's too short. On the other hand, the separate routes are a nice touch, the music, sound, and backgrounds are good quality, and the control is excellent. It's also a very good two-player game, lending credence to its replayability. C+





Slayers the Motion Picture

English Language Version

75 minutes

Available now from A.D.V. Films

SLAYERS THE MOTION PICTURE



slayers the motion picture

Reviewed by Dave Halverson

There exists a breed of anime that, in my opinion, should occupy a slot in any serious collection. These include such memorable titles and series as (to name only a few) *Akira*, *Wings of Honneamise*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Evangelion*, *Venus Wars*, *Gunsmith Cats*, *Lupin: The Castle of Cagliostro*, *Macross Plus*, and *Ninja Scroll*. To this list I now add *Slayers The Motion Picture*. Emanating everything that is refreshing about anime, from the opening scene to the amazing climax, this is one action/adventure/comedy that never stops delivering on all counts. To those who follow *The Slayers* (the 26 Episode - 8 Volume TV series is available subbed and dubbed from CPM), Lina Inverse and Nahga The Serpent need no introduction - the rest of you, listen up. Lina Inverse is a genius sorceress and



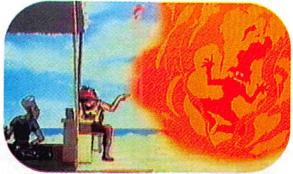
SLAYERS: THE MOTION PICTURE



anime republic

exorcist with a short (really short) temper and an even shorter stack (if you know what I mean). Nahga, on the other hand, is so well endowed that merely balancing seems a chore. She, too, possesses wickedly strong magic and the same huge appetite for mayhem (and good food!) that moves Lina forward. Together they set off on an adventure to *Mipross Island*, where they engage some of the most memorable characters to ever grace an animated feature.

Whimsical medieval antics ensue along with fluid animation, a superb dub, and an overall flawless production. *StMP* possesses the timeless quality that legends are made of. Do not miss it! A



My Dear Marie

Subtitled Version

90 minutes for Mature Audiences

Available now from A.D.V. Films



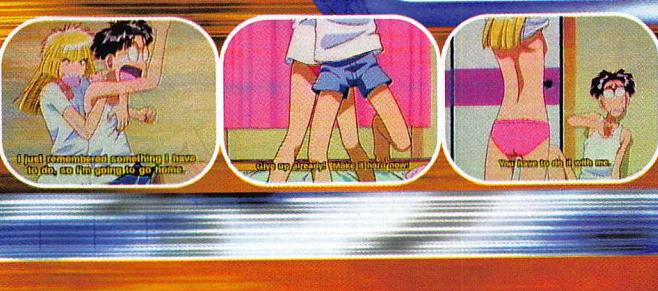
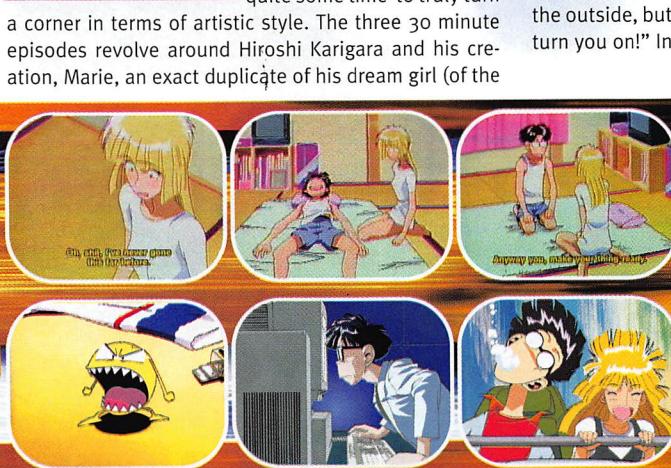
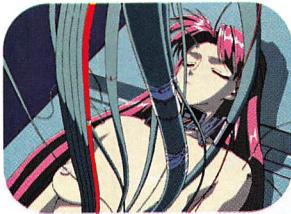
Reviewed by Dave Halverson

Initially, when Rod over at ADV said he was sending over *My Dear Marie* and he couldn't wait to here my opinion, I was like, er, OK, *My Dear Marie*, yeah... Chick Flick! See yah, bye-bye, one for the goopy drama pile!

The next day, about ten minutes into the episode I was completely taken by not only its charm as a sort of cyber/romantic comedy, but its amazingly fresh character designs and overall superlative production values. This is a first class new series, and the first I've seen in quite some time to truly turn a corner in terms of artistic style. The three 30 minute episodes revolve around Hiroshi Karigara and his creation, Marie, an exact duplicate of his dream girl (of the

same name) from school, and the Tennis club he's joined to get close to her (close enough to study every curve).

Of course, a geek like Hiroshi could never get a girl like that so... he's built one himself! Hiroshi's Problems begin when Marie shows up at school (she quickly develops a mind of her own) and comes face to face with... you guessed it. Hiroshi, caught completely off guard, utters the first excuse that comes to mind and passes her off as his sister. What follows are 90 minutes of quality animation and first rate situation comedy. *My Dear Marie* may look tame from the outside, but like the box says, "plug her in and she'll turn you on!" Indeed. A-



The Ping Pong Club

Subtitled Version

120 minutes

Available now from

Central Park Media

Mature (and twisted) Audiences



Reviewed By Bryn Williams



From Director Hata Masami comes a very strange new anime series about six schoolboys who are members of a school ping pong club. The thing is, the boys seem to spend most of the time screwing around, thinking about girls and playing practical jokes, not playing ping pong at all. Team leader Takeda tries his hardest to make the team respect and understand his desire to win, but they just don't care. They're more interested in making us laugh until we cry. These guys have a great deal in common with the likes of *Beavis and ButtHead*, *Southpark* and *The Simpsons*, and when you throw some surreal cut-scenes and Japanese humor in there, you really do have a bizarre strain of comedy.

Some of the stunts that they get up to include cross-dressing, flashing knobs at each other during services,

dressing up as (and eating) bugs, and most disturbingly, shooting ping

pong balls out of the eye that does not blink! In fact, an entire episode revolves around the guys having to purchase new balls because Maeno breaks the last ball by performing the aforementioned stunt. Very strange stuff indeed, but also highly amusing. In fact, I can't remember laughing so hard at an anime. *PPK* isn't suitable for younger audiences, but I have to recommend it to all you viewers that enjoy infantile humor. I really can't wait for more episodes to be translated. Pick it up right now and enjoy. B+





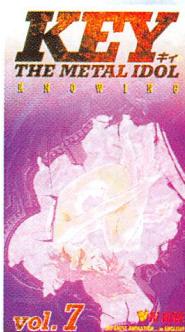
Key the Metal Idol Volumes 1-7

English Language Version

455 minutes total for Mature Audiences

Available now from Viz Video

Reviewed by Dave Halverson



Key the Metal Idol has been a lost treasure of sorts for me. I discounted the series (unjustly) mid-way through Episode 2, distracted by Evangelion and put off by the stillness exhibited mid-way through as Key began to find her way around Sakura's apartment. The whole mundane "Key is a helpless robot" thing wore thin with me quickly, as I am akin to more action, adventure, wild antics, and horror than the drama it seemed was heading my way. Let's see, I thought... Grandpa the puppet master is killed over his secret abilities to animate innate objects. His prize possession is left (stunted and doomed in an under developed body) to fend for herself, and in

a Pinocchio like twist must find 30,000 friends to turn into a human. OK, so she becomes a teen idol and wows the crowd. Or so I thought... Eventually, seven episodes would arrive on the Republic's doorstep until finally (prompted by the bitchin artwork on Volumes 4& 7) I thought, what the hey, let's see if Key's a big star yet, and popped in Volume 3. Instantly I found myself transported into the complex web that had become Key's tortured existence. From the religious nutball Prince Snake Eye to the evil Rukagi, a gel addict in command of a mechanized killing machine, it looked as though Key the Metal Idol was quite the hard-core sci-fi blast after all. I was instantly hooked. So, without further ado, here's how the series has shaped up for me so far...

OK, you've got Ajo - your typical power hungry, greedy, butthole record Exec., a scum bag who preys on gifted young talent. He gets that extra mile out of performers by having replicants made



of them that are controlled via virtual reality by other enslaved artists. The gel needed to animate these lifeless dolls is the secret behind Key's existence (?) and the source of lots of power, but Ajo, in his desperate attempt to harness it, kills Key's Grandfather when he won't give up the recipe. So, the gel is in short supply and must be re-used. When one host burns out, it is passed to another (basically this guy uses everybody). In the midst of this is Key, who... well, I can't give it away, but trust me, the whole innocent little cyber-chick thing goes out the window in a hail of ectoplasm. So, you've got your good guys, your bad guys, your really bad guys, and your "I'm not really sure where these guys stand" guys, and just when you think you've got it all figured out, the plot twists again. In fact, it twists so much that they spend most of

Episode 7 explaining things up to that point with countless flashbacks and sudden revelations. I'm anticipating that all hades is going to break loose in Volume 8.

While the intriguing story is of maximum importance, what I truly respect and admire about Key is that through the entire series (455 minutes so far), with the exception of Volume 7 (because it's essentially 95 minutes of dialogue), the quality of the color, shading and animation has never wavered, as is so often the case with long running series. The dubbing also never falters, although again, in Volume 7 it seems a bit off, but I'm confident this is due to the volume's mundane nature.

When all is said and done, Key the Metal Idol should go down as nothing less than a triumph for dubbed anime and Viz Video as a producer of this quality. A-



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ANIMATION FOR A NEW GENERATION!



Golgo 13: Queen Bee
English Dubbed Version
60 minutes total for Mature Audiences
Available now from Urban Video

Reviewed by Dave Halverson

It all started back in 1985 when *Golgo 13* hit the NES. From that day on I've been a fan of Duke Togo, a.k.a. *Golgo 13*. How cool is Duke Togo? Well, if you ask me, James Bond's got nothing on Duke. Unlike the safe and sane Bond, Duke will still bed down anything that moves, and killing... well, that's just a part of his day. It's been a long wait for a new *Golgo 13* animated adventure (not to mention a new game), but fans of 91's *The Professional* will be glad that, not only has it arrived, but it's as hard core as you could could

possibly imagine. In *Queen Bee*, Duke takes on an assignment that puts him directly in the middle of a twisted web of deception, including political corruption, cheap sex, murder, and one fouled-up family tree. Those who like there anime violent and filled with sex will get a real charge out of this hour long episode, as it is laced from beginning to end with nothing but. The story takes on a distinctly American action-formula feel, with a very familiar mix of situations and locales. From the sweaty, fat, power hungry mob boss, to the liquored up presidential puppet of a candidate and liberation army buried deep within a steamy Jungle, *Queen Bee* seems aimed directly at the huge US action demographic. With its ample doses of special effects, such as vivid lighting, rendered elements and stop frame art stills, it will likely hit its target right between the eyes. Duke wouldn't have it any other way. **B**



Vampire Wars
English Language Version
60 minutes total for Mature Audiences
Available now from Manga

Reviewed by Bryn Williams

Five thousand years ago, two races battled for supremacy in the universe. One had technological powers beyond comprehension, and the other was blessed with an incredible insight into spirituality. They fought timeless wars until both were nearly destroyed. The spirit race hid amongst the dawning of mankind, and became known as vampires, feeding from the blood of humans. The others disappeared and were forgotten. Present day sees an ex-military soldier turned mercenary in Paris looking for work. A secret government organization bribes him into working on a case, where an American military base came under attack from a group of vampires. Why did they attack the installation? Why are they trying to kill an innocent girl? Our hero must protect the girl and solve the mystery. *Vampire Wars* has initial promise, but unfortunately remains mainly unrealized throughout the sixty minute animation. Some OK gory fights and sequences ensue, but ultimately the story drags and brings nothing new to an otherwise potentially good plot-line. The animation quality is comparable to older anime such as *Cyber City OEDO* and *A.D. Police*, if even that good. Overall, *Vampire Wars* looks and feels dated. C-



Ranma 1/2 Big Trouble in Nekorion, China
Special DVD features:
1. Language Selection (English or Japanese)
2. Japanese Subtitles
3. Character Profiles, Product Library
Available now from Viz Video

Reviewed by Melanie Melton

In *Big Trouble in Nekorion China*, Akane Tendo is literally swept off her feet by a prince and offered a kingdom beyond riches... all because of a piece of paper. An ancient scroll handed down for generations promising love and happiness with a prince finds Akane. If she were Cinderella, this would be a dream come true, but Akane already has a fiancée. It's the wrong time, the wrong place, and the wrong girl.

With great animation in tow, the first *Ranma 1/2* theatrical movie brought to DVD is pure eye candy. Vibrant coloring and detailed character art bring the refreshing look of *Ranma* to life in style, and cast members from the OAVTV series deliver a great dub to compliment the movie. Along with the usual compliment of DVD goodies, *Ranma* fans get the original Japanese and English theatrical trailers along with awesome original character drawings.

Popular with young adult male/female viewers because of its mix-up mayhem, martial arts and zany transformations, *Ranma 1/2* is a must see for anyone who likes a wicked sense of humor. In Rumiko Takahashi's world of *Ranma*, a man becomes a panda, a girl becomes a cat, and boys turn into the strangest things. "Yin and Yang has never been so much fun!" *Big Trouble in Nekorion China* delivers!



Grave of the Fireflies

English Language Version

45 minutes for General Audiences

Available now from Central Park Media



Reviewed by Mike Griffin

I've always admired anime for its ability to convey emotion through animation. There is no other hand drawn artform that can portray the spectrum of human response so effectively. And while the vast majority of Japanese animation is comedic or action-based, some films, like *Grave of the Fireflies*, are simply dramatic masterpieces. Based on the award-winning autobiographical novel by Akiyuki Nosaka, *Grave of the Fireflies* is a profoundly touching story set in post-war Japan, right before the American occupation. An orphaned brother and sister, 14-year-old Seita and young 4-year-old Setsuko, are left to fend for themselves in a harsh social climate, where people are only looking after their own interests. We witness their courageous struggle to survive, how they cope with the death of a parent, and the bond that grows between them.

Grave of the Fireflies holds onto your heart the entire way through. We're given an accurate, telling vision of the times. The war changes most people, but Seita and Setsuko continue to experience the joy of youth through it all. Especially precious is young Setsuko; her innocence and strength is contrasted by moments of pure insight, untainted by cruel reality. At one point she asks, "Why do fireflies have to die so soon?" One can't help but sympathize.

I watched the dubbed version of *GOTF*, and came away impressed by the voice acting throughout. But that's really not the point. Getting technical with this film would be some form of sacrilege. It really is a beautiful story and an instant anime classic. Find the time, settle down in a quiet spot, and absorb this sad tale. A



News and information from the belly of the Anime Republic...

We're more than just a crew of slaves bolted down in front of our TV's here at the Anime Republic. Every now and then we actually pile into a vehicle or two and head out into the cruel, cool world. This past July we made our way to the Anaheim Hilton & Towers and Convention Center for the annual Anime Expo, a place where anime fans go to look at girls (unless you're a girl, then you have to look at the floor, unless of course...) and spend lots of money... preferably company dough in the name of research! Here's the skinny from behind the scenes...



Bandai is currently sub-titling three blockbusters for an on-line only release via their web site (www.bandai.com): *Escarflowne*, *Saber Marionette J*, and *Bastard*. I'll www dot whatever I have to to get all three! Elsewhere, ADV is working on bringing us the first US game-to-anime translation ever, with *SIN* (see GR issue 1 for the full story on the game). *Sin* will be drawn and animated in Japan and jointly produced. We'll have more on this story as it evolves. Rounding out this batch of revelations, ADV is also preparing the entire *Nadia* series for US consumption in both subbed and dubbed form! Great news, huh! We'll have more for you in October along with our first look at *Tekken* (and hopefully some of ADV's new Sega licenses) and the usual dose of goods from all of the companies saving us from the normalcy of American TV... yeah right, Springer's normal.



Reis...Reis... Reis every-
where!! It's like Genesis 13
all over again. AAHHH!!!

This girl looks as much like
Chun-Li as Roseanne does
Salma Hayek.



Dragon Ball Z Action! is the collectible card game based upon the #1 weekly syndicated TV show Dragon Ball Z seen twice weekly on the Saban Kids' Network.

Starter Pack \$8.98 each
Booster Pack \$1.98 each



THE NAMEK SAGA CONTINUES BETRAYAL

Dragon Ball Z - Betrayal (Vol. 12)
Frieza's henchman Dodoria finds himself captured by Vegeta and reveals that Frieza was the one to destroy the Saiyan planet! Vegeta takes his revenge upon Dodoria and decides to betray Frieza and search for the Dragon Balls himself.

COLLISION

Dragon Ball Z - COLLISION (Vol. 13)
Vegeta challenges Frieza's henchman, Collision. Early in their conflict, Vegeta surprises Collision with his increased power, but Collision shocks Vegeta by transforming into an incredibly powerful monster.

VHS - English Dubbed \$14.98
(three episodes • approx. 65 min. running time) each



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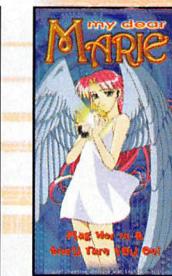


TOP FIVE ANIME

GAMERS' REPUBLIC EDITORS' TOP FIVE

D. Halverson

1. My Dear Marie AD Vision
2. Ruin Explorers AD Vision
3. Golgo13:Q.B. Urban Vision
4. Slayers Movie AD Vision
5. Key the Metal Idol VIZ



B. Williams

1. Ping Pong Club CPM
2. Ushio & Tora AD Vision
3. Darkstalkers VIZ
4. Cyber City OEDO Manga
5. My Neighbor Totoro Fox



M. Melton

1. Patlabor CPM
2. Dragonball Z Pioneer
3. M.Knight Rayearth Clamp
4. Slayers Software Sculptors
5. Blueseed ADV



TIME

GAMERS' REPUBLIC READERS' TOP FIVE

1. Evangelion 13 AD Vision
2. Macross Plus Manga
3. Tenchi Muyo oav Pioneer
4. Dragonball Z Pioneer
5. Ninja Scroll Manga



TOP FIVE ANIME CONTEST!

This Month's Winners:

1 Chad Roberts
Woodstock, Ontario

2 Evan Butts
Virginia Beach, VA

3 Ben Versluis
Moline, IL

Congratulations to this month's winners!

To enter the ADV/Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime Contest, simply send us a list of your favorite five anime, new or old. Make sure to include your name, address and age, and send it to: **Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, suite 218, Westlake Village, CA 91361.** First prize is Shinji's EVA-01 (which stands over 20 inches tall) and *Evangelion 1 through 13!!* Second Prize: Any two ADV releases and an ADV T-Shirt. Third Prize: Any 1 ADV release. All three winners receive a GR subscription. For your free ADV catalog (and this is one cool catalog) write to: **AD Vision, 5750 Blintiff #217, Houston, TX 77036.**

No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited, not responsible for lost or damaged luggage, see sweepstakes rules for details. 76 77 78 79



GR Reader Survey

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
e-mail address _____

What is your age? _____

How much time do you spend reading each issue of Gamers' Republic?

- less than 30 minutes
- less than one hour
- one to two hours
- more than two hours

How many times will you go back to look at a previous issue?

- 1-3 4-6
- more than 6

How many people do you show the magazine to?

- 1-3 4-6
- more than 6

Which other magazines are you currently purchasing?

- EGM
- GamePro
- Next Generation
- PC Gamer
- Computer Gaming World
- PSM
- Other: _____

Where do you buy most of your magazines?

- Software store
- Book Store
- Newsstand
- Grocery/Drug Store
- Mini Mart
- Subscription
- Other: _____

Which system(s) do you currently use?

- Nintendo64 PlayStation
- Saturn Genesis
- Super NES GameGear
- Gameboy
- Other: _____

Do you own a PC?

- Yes No

While you could fill out the information on this page, carefully tear it out, and mail it to the address below, may we suggest making a photocopy first? Or better yet, buy two issues of GR. One to cut up and one for your collection...

If so, is it used for gaming?

- Yes No

How many hours a week do you play games?

- under 5 5-10
- 10-20 20-40
- more than 40

How many console games do you purchase per year?

- New: _____
- Used: _____

How many PC games do you purchase per year?

- New: _____
- Used: _____

How many games (PC or console) do you rent per year?

- _____

What are your favorite PC/console genres?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2D Action | <input type="checkbox"/> Role Playing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3D Action | <input type="checkbox"/> 2D Fighting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Action/RPG | <input type="checkbox"/> 3D Fighting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arcade Racing | <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Racing/Combat | <input type="checkbox"/> Golf |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flight/Race Sim | <input type="checkbox"/> Football |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3D Shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> Baseball |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Puzzle | <input type="checkbox"/> Basketball |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RTS | <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corridor Shooter | <input type="checkbox"/> Futuristic Sports |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

Do you prefer hand drawn or polygonal characters?

- Hand Drawn Polygonal

Are you offended by violence and/or nudity in video games?

- Yes No

Do you or would you buy a game soundtrack?

- Yes No

Where do you purchase your games?

- Local retailer
- Phone/mail order
- Online
- Other: _____

Do you purchase import games?

- Yes No

If so, why?

- Game not available in U.S.
- Import has better packaging
- Game comes out in Japan first
- Other: _____

Do you buy Japanese animation?

- Yes No

If so, how many videos per year?

- 1-3 4-6
- 7-10 more than 10

Do you prefer anime subtitled or dubbed?

- Subtitled Overdubbed

Tell 'em what they could win, Johnny!

This month it's an ultimate PC gaming system, including a 300 mHz Pentium 2, Voodoo 2 Card, Sound Card, Speakers with subwoofer, 19" monitor, plenty of RAM and disk space, and a year's supply of Rice-a-Roni, the San Francisco treat. A winner will be selected at random from surveys we receive.



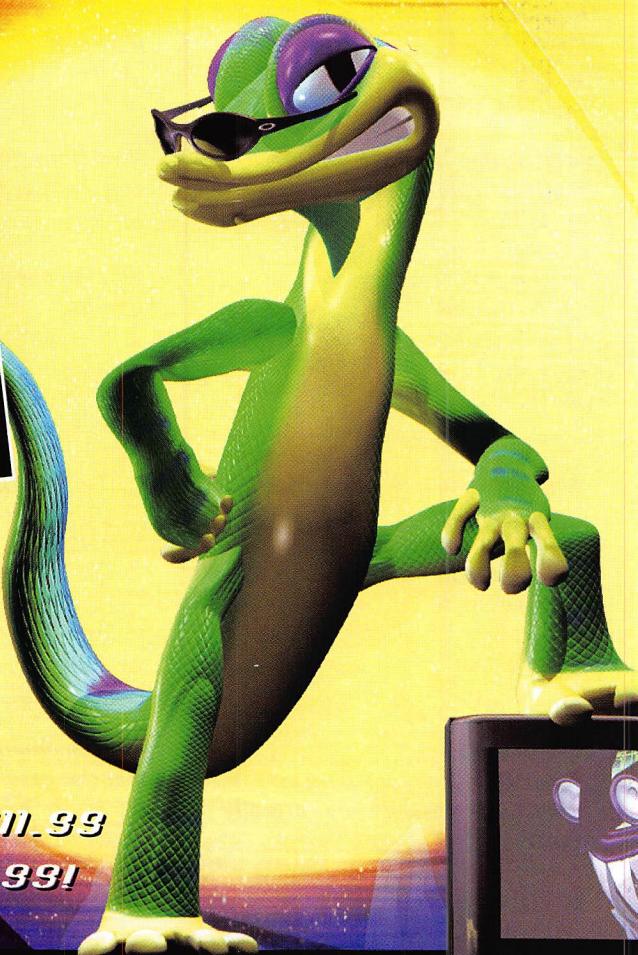
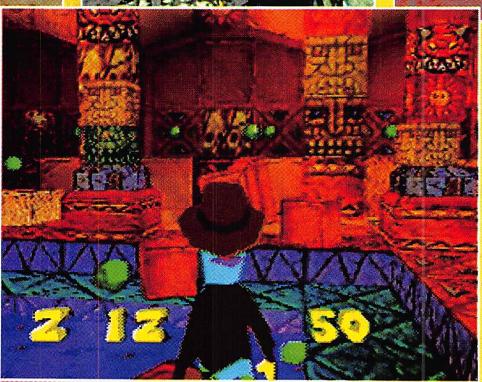
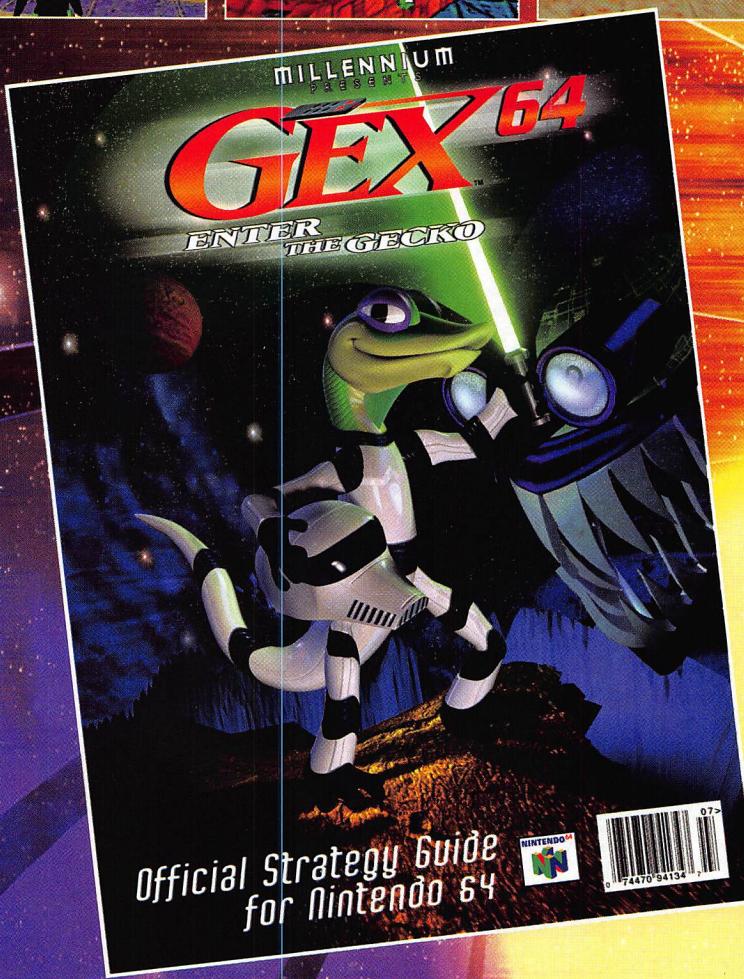
Settle down, Farn! This is only a representation of the system we're giving away. We're still collecting all the best parts for this baby.

Send your completed survey forms to: Gamers' Republic Reader Survey, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, suite 111, Westlake Village, CA 91361

On second thought, let's nix the Rice-a-Roni, and just give away the computer.



*Who's the lizard
with all the action?*

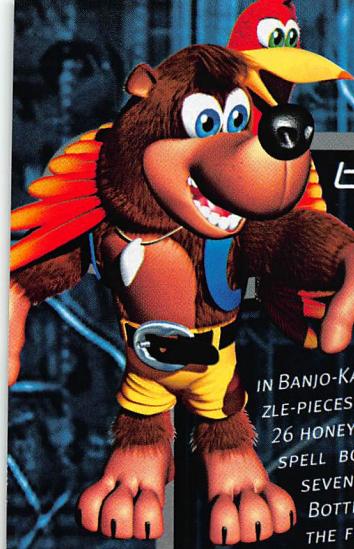


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banjo-kazooie

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE GRAND MASTER STATUS IN BANJO-KAZOOIE, YOU NEED TO COLLECT 100 PUZZLE-PIECES, 900 NOTES, MANY MUMBO TOKENS, 26 HONEYCOMB SECTIONS AND THREE "CHEATO" SPELL BOOKS. OH YEAH, AND COMPLETE THE SEVEN INTERACTIVE JIGSAW PUZZLES THAT BOTTLES CHALLENGES YOU TO DO. TO VIEW THE FULL ENDING, YOU MUST HAVE ALL 100 PUZZLE-PIECES. IF YOU HAVE LESS, YOU ARE TOLD TO GO BACK AND GET THE OTHERS. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO GET THEM ALL, BECAUSE YOU WILL NEED THEM IN THE FINAL STAGES OF THE GAME IN ORDER TO GIVE YOURSELF A FIGHTING CHANCE. NOW TO THE CODES...

TO ACCESS ALL SEVEN OF BOTTLES' CODES, YOU NEED TO FINISH TREASURE TROVE COVE. THEN SIMPLY RETURN TO BANJO'S HOUSE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GAME AND LOOK DIRECTLY AT THE PICTURE OF BOTTLES HANGING ON THE WALL (USE C-UP TO LOOK). THERE ARE SEVEN CHALLENGES TO BEAT. EACH TIME YOU BEAT ONE OF THE MOLES PUZZLE CHALLENGES, YOU CAN GO INSIDE THE BANJOKAZOOIE SANDCASTLE AND PUNCH IN A CODE. [NOTE: YOU MUST BEAT THE CHALLENGE TO BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE CODE.]

- PUZZLE 1 - BOTTLESBONUSONE** [BANJO = BIG HEAD]
- PUZZLE 2 - BOTTLESBONUSTWO** [BANJO = BIG HANDS AND FEET]
- PUZZLE 3 - BOTTLESBONUSTHREE** [KAZOOIE = BIG HEAD]
- PUZZLE 4 - BOTTLESBONUSFOUR** [BANJO = THIN BODY AND HEAD]
- PUZZLE 5 - BOTTLESBONUSFIVE** [BANJO = THIN BODY AND HEAD, BIG FEET AND HANDS]
- PUZZLE 6 - BIGBOTTLESBONUS** [BANJO = THIN BODY, BIG HEAD, HANDS AND FEET]
- PUZZLE 7 - WISHYWASHYBANJO** [BANJO TURNS INTO A WASHING MACHINE. HE RETAINS HIS MOVES]



*all secrets
revealed!*

codex republica

NOBONUS - CHANGES BANJO AND KAZOOIE BACK TO THEIR NORMAL STATE WHEN A CODE IS ENTERED.



CHEATO THE SPELL BOOK APPEARS IN THREE DIFFERENT AREAS THROUGHOUT GRUNTILDA'S LAIR. WE'RE NOT GOING TO TELL YOU WHERE, BUT HE WILL GIVE YOU THREE CODES THAT CAN BE ENTERED IN THE SANDCASTLE:

BLUEEGGS

ENABLES YOU TO CARRY 200 EGGS

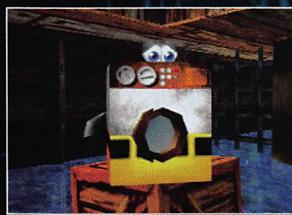
REDFEATHERS

ENABLES YOU TO CARRY 100 RED FEATHERS

GOLDFEATHERS

ENABLES YOU TO CARRY 20 GOLD FEATHERS

NOW TO THE ENDING. MUMBO WILL SHOW YOU THREE POSTCARDS THAT WILL SHOW YOU AREAS IN THE GAME THAT YOU COULD NOT PREVIOUSLY ACCESS, E.G. THE FROZEN KEY IN WOZZA'S CAVE IN FREEZEZY PEAK. THESE WILL APPARENTLY BE ACCESSIBLE IN BANJOTOOIE, WHICH IS TENTATIVELY THE RATHER UNIMAGINATIVE TITLE FOR THE SEQUEL. QUITE HOW THEY WILL ACHIEVE THIS IS UNCLEAR, BUT IT WILL MORE THAN LIKELY BE A PASSWORD TO ENTER. ENJOY.



*all star baseball*

'99

WE RAN SOME CODES FOR ALL STAR LAST MONTH, BUT A TWISTED NEW SET HAS REARED ITS UGLY HEAD, AND HERE THEY ARE.

ALIEN STADIUM AND TEAM

Enter ATEMYBUIK as a cheat code from the main menu. "Let the abductions begin" will appear to confirm code entry. The Alienapolis stadium will appear at the end of the stadium selection screen. This will also enable the Abductors team when playing in that stadium.

MINIATURE HOME RUN DERBY BATTER

Leave a slot open on a team so it is labeled as "Empty" instead of a player's name. Select "Home Run Derby" and select the "Empty" slot. This results in a player so small, he is almost invisible.

HOME RUN DERBY CAMERA CONTROL

Begin a normal game and enable the manual camera view option. Exit the game and begin a new one in Home Run Derby mode. Then simply use a free controller to control the view. Press left to pause the view or right for slow motion.

SLOW MOTION AND FREEZE

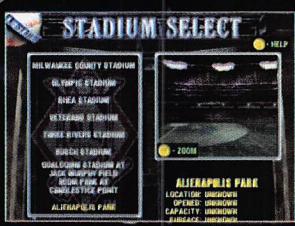
Go to the options and pick manual camera. While playing, you can use the control pad on a non active controller to freeze or put the game into slow motion. Push left on the pad to freeze the game and right to put it into slow motion.

EXTRA PITCHES

Hold Z or L to access more pitches, including a split fastball and screwball.



GO TO THE VEHICLE SELECTION SCREEN AND PRESS THE FOLLOWING C BUTTONS TO ACCESS THE FOLLOWING VEHICLES IN MIDWAY'S ROUGH AND TUMBLE RACER.

PUNISHER TRUCK**4X4 MONSTER TRUCK****THUNDERBOLT TRUCK****THE CRUSHER TRUCK***n2o
nitrous oxide***ACCESS ANY LEVEL**

SQUARE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, X, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, X

WEAPONS CHEAT

SQUARE, X, CIRCLE, SQUARE, X, SQUARE, CIRCLE, SQUARE

WATER EFFECT ON

CIRCLE, X, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE

INFINITE LIVES

CIRCLE, X, X, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, CIRCLE

FIREWALL CHEAT

X, X, SQUARE, X, X, X, TRIANGLE, TRIANGLE

BONUS LEVEL ACCESS

SQUARE, SQUARE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, SQUARE

BONUS SHIP

X, X, X, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, X, TRIANGLE

*dominion
storm over gisti 3*

PRESS ENTER, TYPE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CODES, THEN PRESS ENTER AGAIN TO ACTIVATE THE FOLLOWING CHEATS.

MORE RESOURCES

LUSHEE

FULL MAP

INFRARED

FASTER BUILDING (AFFECTS CPU ALSO)

ZIPPER

*offroad challenge*

world cup '98

**LEVEL 2**

CIRCLE, SQUARE, X, TRIANGLE, X, TRIANGLE, SQUARE,
TRIANGLE, SQUARE

LEVEL 3

CIRCLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, X, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE,
CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE

LEVEL 4

CIRCLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE,
SQUARE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, X

LEVEL 5

TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE,
CIRCLE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE

LEVEL 6

SQUARE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE,
X, X, X, TRIANGLE

LEVEL 7

CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, X, TRIANGLE,
CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE

LEVEL 8

SQUARE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, X, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, X,
TRIANGLE, SQUARE, X

LEVEL 9

X, X, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, X, TRIANGLE, SQUARE,
TRIANGLE, CIRCLE

LEVEL 10

CIRCLE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE, SQUARE, X, TRIANGLE,
CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE

GO TO CUSTOMIZE PLAYER AND ENTER THESE NAMES. ONCE ENTERED, GO BACK TO THE MATCH SELECT SCREEN AND PRESS SCROLL LOCK TO BRING UP THE CHEAT MENU. THEN YOU SIMPLY CHECK OFF THE ONES YOU WANT ACTIVATED. YOU CAN COMBINE CHEATS TO PRODUCE ALIENS WITH BIG HEADS AND SO ON.

TAKE A DIVE**HOT POTATO****BIG HEADS****SKELETON MODE****CRAZYBALL****SILLYMOVES****ALIEN****OPENS UP FIRST CLASSIC GAME****OPENS UP FIRST FOUR CLASSIC GAMES****FLAMING BALL**

CARTMAN

GONZO

GABO

KYLE

MR HAT

POWDER

NEILA

ZICO

HURST

KENNY



THAT DOES IT FOR THIS MONTH'S CODEX, AS OUR CONTINUED PREDILECTION FOR IRRELEVANCY DEMONSTRATES. SEE YOU NEXT TIME.

*crime
killer*

vigilante

8

LUXOFUX'S EXCITING V8 PROVES THAT THERE IS LIFE AFTER TWISTED METAL. ACCESS THE GAME STATUS SCREEN AND PRESS CIRCLE TO BRING UP THE PASSWORD ENTRY SCREEN, AND TRY OUT THESE INTERESTING CODES.

BIG WHEELS

MONSTER_WHEELS

HOMING MISSILE POWER-UP

DEADLY_MISSLE

BONUS CHARACTERS AND LEVELS

WMNNWLHTSCUCLH

LOW GRAVITY

REDUCE_GRAVITY

NO ENEMIES (IN ARCADE MODE)

GO_SIGHTSEEING

INVINCIBILITY

I_WILL_NOT_DIE

VIEW FMV SEQUENCES

SEE_ALL_MOVIES

SAME VEHICLE IN TWO PLAYER MODE

SAME_CHARACTER

EXPERT MODE

HARDEST_OF_ALL



HIGHLIGHT A CHARACTER ON THE GAME STATUS SCREEN AND PRESS X TO VIEW FMV SEQUENCES!



FIND YOURSELF ITCHING TO PUNCH SOMETHING? CHANCES ARE THAT YOU'VE LOST YOUR PATIENCE WITH COMMANDOS. DON'T HESITATE, SKIP TO ANY LEVEL OF YOUR CHOICE WITH THE CODES BELOW. BELIEVE ME, YOU'VE EARNED IT, SO DON'T FEEL GUILTY.

LEVEL 2

4JJXB

LEVEL 3

ZDD1T

LEVEL 4

RFF1J

LEVEL 5

K4TCG

LEVEL 6

DT1WN

LEVEL 7

IH3W1

LEVEL 8

52WIZ

LEVEL 9

924BF

LEVEL 10

HYBM3

LEVEL 11

JFOP3

LEVEL 12

4MB4D

LEVEL 13

BJK4Y

LEVEL 14

TI8D1

LEVEL 15

XQWDC

LEVEL 16

334MW

LEVEL 17

VTIM3



commandos:
behind enemy lines

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Street Fighter EX 2

Soundtrack Arika

B

Hot from the blisteringly awesome arcade game, *Street Fighter EX2*, comes the soundtrack of the same name. Arika and Capcom have teamed up once again to provide fighting fanatics with a worthy sound sequel to *SF EX +Alpha*. The tunes on the disc give the listener a selection of funky synth, revving bass lines, chimes, rapid drum beats and electric guitars. While the overall feel of the music is befitting of an energy-fueled beat-em-up, unfortunately it isn't as catchy as its older cousin, which was very easy on the ears. Not to say that *EX2* is a bad score. Rather, it ends up being forgettable, and so doesn't rate as an essential purchase unless you're a fanatic of the fighting genre. *Street Fighter* perfectionists will no doubt greedily consume it, but if you don't really get turned on by this sort of thing, then you would be advised to skip tracks, and simply enjoy the original *EX* soundtrack that is also included on the CD.

Brynn Williams

D2 Sketches

Kenji Eno First Smile

A

Rarely do we get to enjoy a game soundtrack prior its release, let alone a Dreamcast title. *D2 Sketches* contains ten songs that were all directed and composed by the one and only Kenji Eno. His intention when creating music is to translate the vision in his mind into a piece of music, hoping this vision will be conveyed to the listener in the same way that he envisions it. He's even been quoted as saying that a different part of his brain is consumed by his music as he creates it. I can't vouch for any of Mr Eno's techniques, but I can tell you unequivocally that *D2* will have a gorgeous soundtrack. The slow, symphonic tracks are beautifully composed, and each instrument sounds amazingly well defined. High production quality is in effect. To my surprise, however, there are several killer drum & bass and breakbeat-ish tunes on *Sketches* as well, each conveying a sense of atmosphere as effective as the slow-paced music. I can definitely imagine playing in snowy valleys to this impressive score.

Mike Griffin

Soukagi

Soundtrack Digicube

B+

One of the year's most disappointing games has shown signs of redemption and delivered one of the year's best soundtracks. The anticipation of a free-roaming action game from Square had us quaking in our boots... until the game arrived and we realized that Yuke's (creators of *Hermie Hopperhead*, which ironically had one of the worst soundtracks ever) had blown it. The music, however, if not peculiarly out of place (in such a clunky 3D game), is just amazing. From the outset, hypnotic vocals and distinctly ancient sounding guitar riffs in "Ancient Power" and "Angels Fear Again" bring forth haunting arranged tracks that command your attention. To call these soothing is too mild - mesmerizing sums up the initial tracks. Of *Soukagi's* 17 selections, the emphasis is on ambient, although rhythmic chants and assorted, fairly faster tempos, do make up an acceptable portion, keeping you from slipping off into a *Spyro Gyra*-like trance during *Soukagi's* jungle phase. One of the few non-PCM Square scores, *Soukagi* has benefited greatly from a studio arranged soundtrack.

Dave Halverson

Hello Nasty

Beastie Boys Grand Royal

A

Four long, long years. That's how long we've had to wait for the B-Boys to return to the turntables and mic. Though they've joined the thirty-something crowd, Mike D., Ad Rock and MCA showcase a variety of skills that can only come with age and experience, and surprise us with some new ones (believe it or not, an acoustic set sung by MCA). With lines like, "I'm the king of boggle, there is none higher. I gets eleven points on the word quagmire," how can one not smile and welcome back the three Jewish kids from Brooklyn who revolutionized hip-hop (*Paul's Boutique*=perfection). The album can only be described as an experiment all gone right (be sure to catch their *Intergalactic* video and infomercial...pure Beastie Boys madness). And with the help of DJ Mixmaster Mike of the Invisible Skratch Picklz, the Beasties bring the old school flava on many of the 22 tracks that show the B-Boys are akin to good wine: they only get better as they age.

Greg Han

Pantamerous Metamorphosis

Global Communication Dedicated

A

If any of you remember GC's big album from 1991, you'll probably agree that it's one of the finest ambient efforts of the decade. With long, sweeping layers of modern synth and smooth composition, there's no denying its lasting appeal. Global Communication's latest, *Pantamerous Metamorphosis*, is an hour long journey through "phases," with structured changes of tempo and rhythm between tracks. The Alpha phase is a strong, nine minute drum-driven entry point surrounded by lavish synth sections. You'll reach calm waters when the Beta phase arrives, and soon the Gamma and Delta phases drift into gentle, lethargic synthy prose. As the lush currents of the Epsilon phase wind down, slow, yet unfaltering, you'll find the rhythm simply floats over itself. I assume it's because it's arrived in such fine form after every other purposeful track. This is fantastic modern ambient music, and a worthy successor to the classic '76' 14 album.

Mike Griffin

Grandia

Soundtrack 2 Two-Five Co.

B-

As the name implies, *Grandia Original Soundtracks II* isn't the first music compilation to come from the incredible Game Arts Japanese RPG. In fact, it's the third. The original double CD set covered all the orchestrated and popular PCM tracks, which was closely followed by an arranged CD. Both of these collections presented the inspirational, the moving, the uplifting music *Grandia* was famous for, which leaves us with this latest compilation CD. Two CDs in length, *GOSII* is packed with 41 PCM tracks, covering every single song that the previous releases left out. This means, of course, we have plenty of the more forgettable background tracks here. Those who loved *Grandia* and want to own the music really should only look towards *GOSII* if they already have the two previous CDs - unless they have some strange craving to listen to all the dungeon and battle music first. That's not to say all of the tracks are tedious, but as a whole, *GOSII* pales in comparison to the original.

Ryan Lockhart

Hot New & Upcoming Titles



Import Saturn Titles

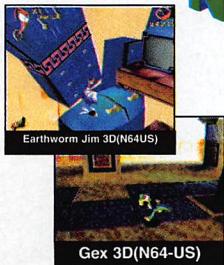
- Samurai Shodown Coll. 3&4
- RealBout Special Best Coll.
- Slayers 2
- Digital Monster(Sim)
- Shining Force 3 Sen.3(RPG)
- How to Use Magic(Sim)
- Guardian Force(RPG)
- Simulation RPG School
- Steam Parts(Shooting)



US N64 Titles

- Gex 64
- WWF WarZone
- Buck Rumble
- Earthworm Jim 3
- Madden 99
- NFL Blitz
- S.C.A.R.S.
- Tonic Trouble

NINTENDO 64



Import N64 Titles

- Bio Tetris
- Dracula X 3D
- F-Zero X
- Fighting Cup
- King Hira 64
- Zelda 64
- Super Robot Spirits

US PlayStation Titles

- Capcom Generations: 1942
- Capcom Generations: G&G
- Castle of Deception
- Duke Nukem: Time to Kill
- Earthworm Jim 3
- G.Darius
- L.A.P.D. 2100
- Lunar: Silver Star Story
- Master of Monsters
- MegaMan Legends
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- SD Gundam G Generations
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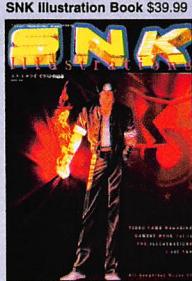
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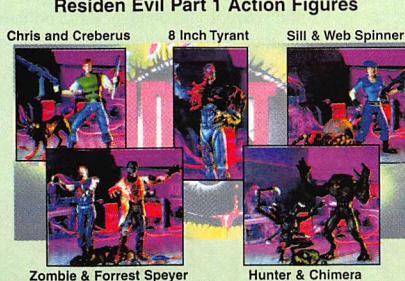
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More Information Coming Soon

There's no good time to be bitten by a vampire, not least when you're pregnant with Wesley Snipes.

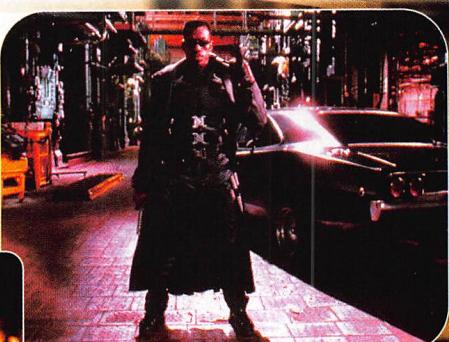
Snipes plays the part of Blade, whose mother is infected by the bite of a vampire. Blade is born with superhuman powers, which are even mightier than that of the strongest vampire. Which is just as well, because this is one guy hell-bent on eradicating the vampires and protecting humanity from their evil ways.

Orphaned and outcast, Blade grows up on the streets, until he is discovered by Abraham Whistler (Kris Kristofferson), who specializes in all things undead. Whistler hones Blade's powers and transforms him into a mighty warrior of mankind. But remember that Blade is a paradox – although he is sworn to defend the human race, he is also part vampire himself – which should provide plentiful conflict.

Blade and Whistler unearth a plot by ultra-evil Deacon Frost (Stephen Dorff) to create a genocidal apocalypse. Frost also plans to dominate all the city's vampires and then wipeout all of humankind. Of course, it's up to Blade to halt Frost in his tracks, dispose of him (as messily as possible) and ensure the human race

survives another day.

If you're easily scared or squeamish, run for cover from this one. Otherwise, the awesome special effects, abundance of leather, and lots of blood combined with plentiful kick-ass action should keep you pinned to your seat.



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DEEP RISING

RATED R

Written and directed by Stephen Sommers, *Deep Rising* is an endearing throwaway monster film that proves entertaining despite the sheer absurdity of most character's behavior and a plot driven completely by that smarmy guy from *Silence of the Lambs*. The bulk of the film takes place aboard a high tech luxury cruise ship, which has been earmarked for looting and insurance scam sinking by a cliché band of well financed thieves, led by Wes Studi. They've chartered a ship commanded by an unsuspecting Treat Williams to take them to the multimillion-dollar vessel, only to find almost everyone aboard dead with "blood everywhere." Apparently, a mutated sea creature that grows to incredible sizes near the surface has found the ship to be a hospitable and well stocked home. An intimidating and ferocious monster design by Rob Bottin (*The Thing*, *Robocop*, *Total Recall*) reeks a bit too much of CG, but has an appropriately sinewy sea creature quality. Fans of gore should be pleased with some incredibly gruesome deaths, one in particular involving the monster's digestive processes. The actors, including sexy Famke Janssen, do a good job with the mostly heavy handed material and the pacing of the film is quick, which unfortunately leaves little room for any real character involvement or logic concerns. You'll forget about this ultimately silly film soon after its viewing, but you probably won't be bored watching it.



KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE NOT RATED



Often described as the "Walt Disney of Japan," Hayao Miyazaki has had an illustrious career in the world of Japanese quality animation, with titles such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Porco Rosso* and *Nausicaa*. *Kiki's Delivery Service* is the latest offering from Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli. Kiki is a 13-year-old witch whose best friend is a little black cat called Jiji, and on the eve of her birthday, she must leave home for one year to find a town in need of her special abilities. Together they set off on a magical journey and eventually find work in a large city by the ocean. Kiki becomes a bakery delivery girl, using her flying powers to full effect. The introduction of Tombo, Ursula and other characters all add up to an extremely enjoyable tale of self-discovery, independence and optimism. The animation is superb, and with voices from Kirsten Dunst and Phil Hartman, the film is a joy to watch.

CUTTING ROOM FLOOR:

JP Part 3!...Plans for the third installment of *Jurassic Park* are well underway. Steven Spielberg won't be directing this one, but he will be producing. Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment will be releasing the movie, maybe as early as summer 2000, and Michael Crichton will develop the story.

Star Trek Returns...*Star Trek 9* (working title) is in production, and the usual *Next Generation* crew will star. Jonathan Frakes will again direct and Patrick Stewart will Associate Produce. No details on the storyline, but we'll keep you posted.

Bugs...*Antz*, by DreamWorks, has been brought forward (due in theaters Oct 2). Starring the voices of Woody Allen and Sylvester Stallone (plus numerous other stars), this CGI bug-fest stars Allen (or his voice at least) as a misfit worker resolute on becoming an individual in a colony. He's also got his sights on the beautiful Princess Bala (Sharon Stone), the spoiled Queen's daughter.

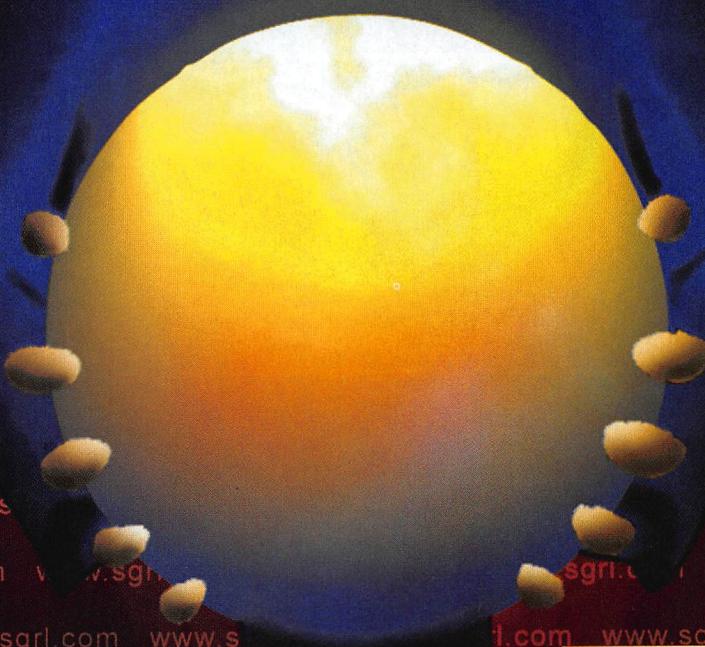
And more Bugs...Another insect-infested flick. On its way soon from Disney, *A Bug's Life* is due November 2. John Lasseter of *Toy Story* fame is involved, so it should be pretty impressive. More on both of these next issue.

Virus...Avid readers of the comic book *Virus* will have to wait a bit longer for the feature film release - the movie has been put back until first quarter 1999.

Spawn 2000...Fans of the feature-length *Spawn* will be mighty pleased to find out that New-Line Cinema has officially optioned the sequel, scheduled for release in 2000.

CINE MATRIX

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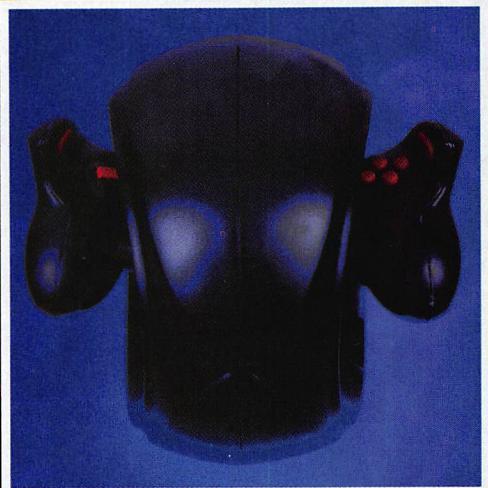


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www.rareware.com

After a brief period of absence, dotCOM is back to help guide you through some of the more interesting web sites out there. There is no rhyme or reason to the Internet, so each month GR will trawl through the thousands of available areas open to the public, and bring you the ones that catch our eye the most. The first of our three this month is a site that has been a very long time in the making (these guys must have been slacking off badly!), and it is the Official Rare homepage. Based in Twycross, England, Rare have been making games for many

www.kaon.com

The second site this month is Kaon's Terra - Battle for the Outland. Kaon representatives recently stopped by the GR offices to show us a quite amazing piece of technological programming. The game is a multi-player festival taking place in a virtual world (the play area is actually the size of a real planet), where individuals can team up and form Clans and dominate areas of the globe by building fortresses and defenses. The players move around in a selection of different vehicles, ranging from tanks, jeeps and even helicopters. According to the programmers, the game can support tens of thousands of players simultaneously. Not bad, eh? After a brief session, GR Ploppy found himself bewildered by the sheer magnitude of the scope that this game possesses. It is quite possible to travel for eight hours real-time in order to reach a rendezvous point. This is madness. The concept is the way forward for online-gaming. This is getting frighteningly real.



www.64i.com

Run by Makaze (a.k.a. Jeremy Dunham), this N64 fan site oozes loveliness. Written and designed by a large pool of staff (presumably non-paid), 64i succeeds where many have failed. Bringing you up-to-date news and stories, excellent reviews and previews, codes, strategies and even a message board, 64i is an excellent addition to the N64 online presence. Keep up the good work chaps!



This has been just the tip of the cybernetic iceberg that is the internet. Should you have thoughts, comments, information on sites of interest or any other game-based information, tell us about it... bwilliams@gamersrepublic.com

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FALLOUT

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**Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 218,
Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA (editorial@gamersrepublic.com).**

Dear Gamers' Republic,

These days video game companies love to license. From the NBA to the *Power Rangers*, anything that can make a game stand out from the crowd will probably be used. This is good, as we now get to play as our favorite basketball stars and battle with our favorite movie heroes. But in terms of cartoon licenses, I think many of those associations may be on the wrong track. In recent history, companies have been hard at work trying to license the most recent and popular cartoon heroes, from *Eek the Cat* to the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. This may be a mistake. Although the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (*TMNT*) may bring in the big bucks, the real treasure lies with the older cartoons from the 1980s. You see, large portions of *TMNT* fans are children, who in many occasions cannot afford to pay \$50 for a video game. However, fans of the older classics such as the *Thundercats* and *Transformers* are now well into, if not over, their late teens, and are also the ones who can afford the video games. I am sure there are writers working for Gamers' Republic Magazine who were fans of cartoons like the *Thundercats* in their youth, and would immediately purchase a *Thundercats N64* game if they saw it on the store shelf without question. Just seeing the *Thundercats* on the cover would warrant a purchase. Such is the case for millions all around the world, who have imagined a *He-Man* game, or a true *Transformers* game since their youth. Yet videogame companies continue to overlook this, and stand in line to license the next big cartoon. Let us all hope that they awaken, and realize that the true gold lies buried in the past. By the power of Greyskull.

Your reader,
Gibson Yen, via e-mail

We hear that they're going to start licensing licenses soon! Actually Gibby, you have a valid point, although I'd pass on *Thundercats* and move right into a 3D shooter starring *Underdog* or *Gigantor*, a *Kimba the White Lion* RPG and a 3D adventure with *Johnny Quest*! Oh, and by the way, no cover is worth 50 bucks unless the game is called "Selma shreds her threads" and when you turn the box...

Dear GR,

I am disturbed by the direction that RPGs have taken. Square, in particular, has me upset because they continue to take the *Final Fantasy* series away from its roots. The result is that *FF7* is not nearly as much fun as the classic *Final Fantasy 2*. *FF7* bows in admiration for the great *Chrono Trigger*, which definitely is more worthy of a sequel than *FF7*. The graphics are beautiful, but detract from the gameplay when you can't

tell what you can interact with. Even with its flaws, the game keeps you captivated until the end, when you realize that they forgot to add one. No, the crap at the end of the credits is not acceptable. *Final Fantasy 2* had a wide scope ending that resolved much of the plot and gave a sense of closure to the game. I should have known when I witnessed the lame ending to *FF3* that *FF7* would take that lameness a step further by really leaving you on a ledge concerning what really happened to the characters. Did all the humans perish, only to leave the #@%&* animals to survive? What happened? No endings in RPGs! Is this lunacy? What do we play these things for anyway? Good God!

Bruce Golston, via e-mail

I can sympathize with your position on *FF7*'s ending. It's almost as if the money ran out just as they completed the game. I also agree that the traditional gameplay perspective and hand drawn art would have made for a better overall product. But the fact remains that *FF7* sold an illegal amount of copies. Whether this was due to the hype or because people genuinely prefer polygonal characters on pre-rendered stages will remain a mystery until the sequel arrives in this country in late '99. Now, I hate to get off on a rant here, but I also believe that endings in general are not only one of the biggest let downs, but also one of the most overlooked aspects of video game development in general. Beating games is (or should be if it's a good one) hard to do, and one of the main reasons to do so is for the reward. I remember when CD gaming first arrived and people thought all that extra memory would spell longer games and epic endings. It just never happened. I guess that teams are so burnt on a game once they're finally finished that they just turn out the lights and go home. One way of curing this would be for them to do the ending first. As one that evaluates games for a living, I certainly do appreciate it when I run across an ending worthy of my time and, by the same token, get very frustrated by the cheapness of that dreaded line "Thank you for playing" following the credits. Most recently I beat *Quest* shortly after writing my review, which had to go to film as I was approaching the last scenario. I don't think I've ever been as disappointed as I was in this case, not only because the ending was like, the worst in recorded history, but because it was too late to change my review afterwards. I'd have scored it a full grade lower, as this game takes a lot of patience to beat. Maybe things will change with the Dreamcast - or more letters like yours.

To the staff and personnel at GR,
I'm an avid reader of videogame mags and I've

read many different ones. When I saw your mag on the shelf for the first time (issue 1) I thought, "oh great, another magazine with probably nothing for me to enjoy. Just another 30 minute skimmer at tops." (Sorry about that.) I bought it anyway, and man was I surprised. I couldn't even put it down until I read almost every word. Before then, I was an *** fan who didn't know what he was missing until *GR*. I especially like the information that seems all new, like the "Techfront." The info in "Frontlines" kept my interest peaked - like the stuff no one else talks about (i.e.: S.O.A. is full of B.S. and Saturn is alive and well in Europe). Many of your articles appear to be ahead of other mags and your editors' article writing styles are extremely fluid and energetic. One of your coolest sections is the "Anime Republic." I don't read any other mags that go in depth like you people do. *GR* is the best magazine I've ever read on videogames, and the other mags should take some lessons from the new guys. Sayonara ***, Hagimemashite *GR*. *GR* reader, Chris Clinefelter - via e-mail

When we set out to make the ultimate video game (and related goodness) magazine we all had this kind of response in mind. Raising the bar is what it's all about - and we're just getting started. Our sincerest gratitude, Chris.

Hello Gamers Republic,
Your magazine is incredible! It has all the key ingredients to a wicked magazine. *Anime Republic*, great interviews, games of all platforms, solid reviews, import section, movie reviews and good strategies to name a few. The design is great and I really liked the "Frontlines" and "Techfront" sections.

There is one thing that is lacking, and it is probably because it was the first issue. You have to have fan art and letters, and lots of it. This element is quintessential to a mag. At least two or three pages of letters and at least one page of fan art, more is preferable. It gives the readers a sense of being involved with your magazine. You do have lots of anime republic, and that is great. But you have to have LOTS of *Anime Republic*! Thanks for bringing us a great magazine. Keep it up! I hope you consider my suggestions.

Thanks. Tyson Villeneuve & Reid Antonello, via e-mail

And here they both are. We only had space for one page of art, but will likely plan for more in the months ahead. Also, we are both relieved and excited that so many people are getting behind the *Anime Republic*. You wouldn't believe the response it has generated. We love doing it, and truly relish the comments.

READER ART

Well, it starts here. Let the game art flow! We'll come up with some sort of giveaway for this section of the Republic so start drawing!

Send your scribblings to:

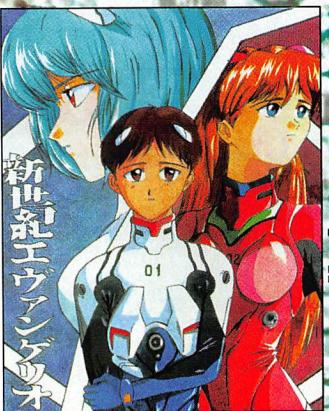
**Fallout Art, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 218,
P.S. Joe, whatever we end up giving away, you get the first one!**



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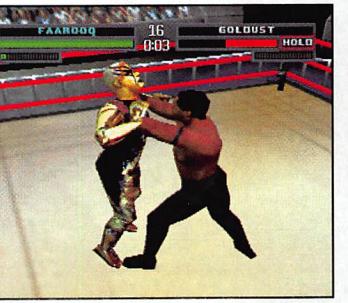


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The Wild 9



Fry your foe in flames, grind 'em in fans, or impale 'em on spikes and use 'em as platforms...

In the October issue, *The Republic* will dig deep into the genius behind Shiny's first thoroughbred PlayStation platformer, *The Wild 9*. Thrill to the omnipotent destructive force that is The Rig. Feel your heart pound as you take on Karn, the most diabolical villain in video game history. Join forces with eight alien teenagers to evoke you're revenge. You'll torture, maim, and kill doing it, and love every second. A culmination of years of development, *The Wild 9* is set to deliver another epic romp as only Shiny can. We'll feature a complete game diary along with team commentary, exclusive never before seen levels and a word from Tommy Tallarico on the game's epic soundtrack. Don't you dare miss it.

As part of this amazing offer, we'll include our long awaited first hands-on evaluations of *Rayman 2* and *Tonic Trouble*, Ubisoft's 3D-tastic dynamic duo for both the PC and Nintendo 64; the latest Dreamcast info; all the newest imports, including *Deep Fear*, *Lunar 2*, and *Lupin* for the Saturn; *Rakuga Kids*, *Choro Q64*, and *Super Robot Spirits* for the Nintendo 64, and to top things off, *Star Ocean: Second Story* and *Brave Fencer* for the PlayStation.

We'll also bring about the first artificial lunar eclipse... maybe.

**ISSUE 5:
STREET DATE:
SEPTEMBER 15, 1998**

Pocket Fighter



Introducing Pocket Fighter, the home version of the arcade game featuring diminutive versions of several Capcom's best-known video game characters. Such as Morrigan from "Darkstalkers", Ryu and Chun Li from "Street Fighter", as well as other characters from Capcom games.

The object of the game in single-play mode, is to beat all of the other characters and gather the gems and power-up that your opponent loses every time he or she is hit or kicked by their opponent. Pocket Fighter is going to be the best fighting game out this year. For the Sega Saturn.

Dracula X

This wonderfully developed side scrolling game has been much enhanced for the Saturn. It will include a new character, as well as a few 3D tricks thrown in for good measure. Gameplay is made more exciting by the addition of two new wings to Dracula's castle, the "Underground Cavern" and the "Poisonous Plant Ridge". This is a game that will fully take advantage of the Saturn's 3D capabilities. For the Sega Saturn.



Introducing Radiant Silvergun, the newest vertical shooter from Treasure, the company that brought you Contra. This newly released title features characters animated by the artists who designed Guardian Heroes, this is a truly unique 2 person, 2D shooter.



DEEP FEAR



Introducing "Deep Fear", currently the hottest Saturn Japan. This underwater adventure game, features the type of elements that made "Resident Evil" a best seller. Adventure begins when a Top Secret Nuclear Sub crashes into a Top Secret Marine Base. When a sea rescue operation is dispatched, all hell breaks loose, begging to be killed moments before they are transformed. It all adds up to an incredible adventure, which have rarely been seen on the Sega Saturn.

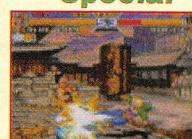


Vampire Savior

The most exciting fighter for the Sega Saturn, a perfect translation of the arcade. With the added advantage of a 4 meg ram cartridge, there are almost NO loading times, and best of all, once you beat the game, you can access an option that will let you play it in English! This is fighting at its ultimate.

SNK's CLASSICS SERIES

Real Bout Special

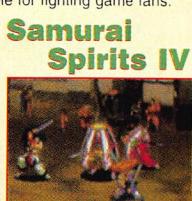


BLAZING TORA



X-Men vs. Street Fighter Faster & Better Than PSX Version!

Gamers have been awaiting for this hot arcade game to be released for the Saturn, and it's finally available and with the 4 meg ram cart, it's a dream come true. Just like the arcade.

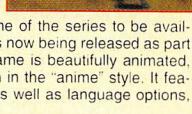
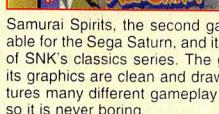


TIME COMMAND



FIRE PRO-WRESTLING

This all time favorite 2D wrestling game featuring 6 player battle royal, and 3 different style wrestling rings. Plus each characters have their own unique wrestling styles and awesome maneuvers. This game is a must have for wrestling fans.



DEAD or ALIVE



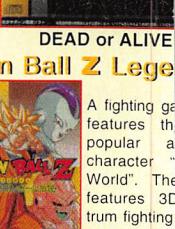
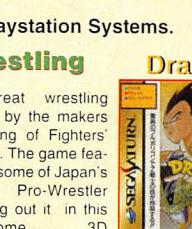
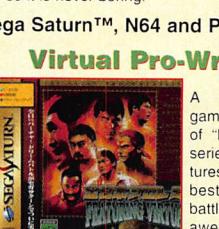
4MEG TURBO KEY For the Sega Saturn

The 4M Turbo Key is an adapter to play imported games, with a 4 meg ram cart, a back-up memory card. Never will you need to swap converters and ram carts again when you play your imported Saturn games. Ideal for games like "X-Men vs. Street Fighter", "Vampire Savior" and "King of Fighters 97".

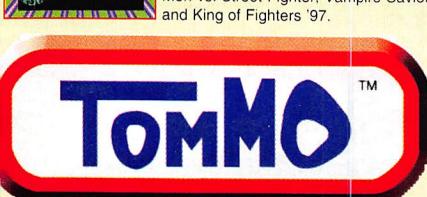


ST-KEY For the Sega Saturn

ST-Key is an adapter that plugs into the cartridge port to allow the Saturn to play imported software. Ideal for Japanese and European games. (Converter does not translate the texts).



A great wrestling game by the makers of "King of Fighters" series. The game features some of Japan's best Pro-Wrestlers battling it out in this awesome 3D wrestling game.



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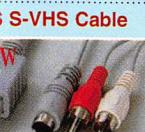
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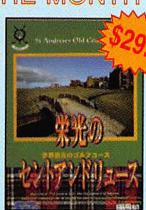
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Romance of The Three Kingdoms IV

Wall of Fire

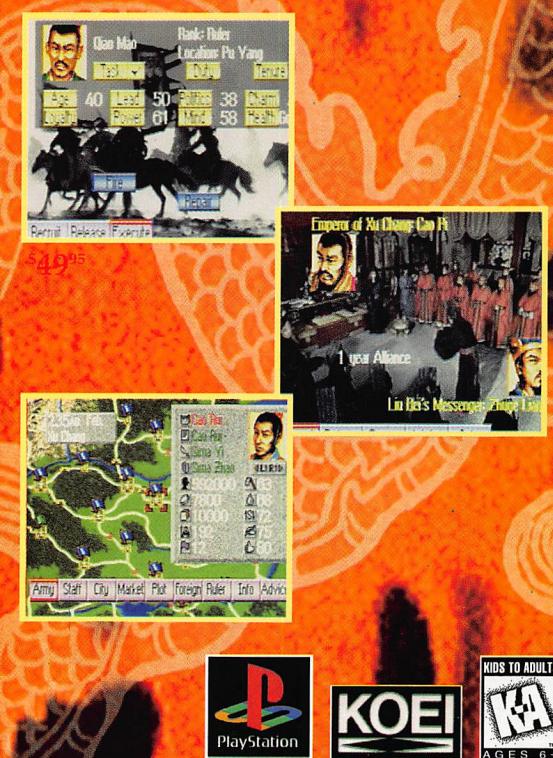


PlayStation



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